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STRANGE HARMONY

BY

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China Through a College Window
The Land and Life of China, etc.

SKETCHES BY

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PREFACE

These experiences of a family during internment by the Japanese are recorded partly because of general interest, but also so that some of the lessons gained during the endurance of a particular kind of poverty may not be forgotten. Moreover, it is hoped that the reader may be aware of the strength and hope that Christian faith and fellowship may bring to a group of prisoners. The family was not alone in being conscious of an Abiding Presence through whom life became not only tolerable but filled with much happiness.

This is not a history of the internment camp at Stanley, Hong Kong, but a personal account of one family and some of those with whom its members came in contact. There were many, particularly unattached men and women and elderly couples, for whom life was much more difficult. Some who, unlike this family, had connections with Hong Kong and consequently received parcels from friends in the city, generally fared better. Others, who arrived earlier in the camp, were able to live with or near their friends and so enjoy mutual help and encouragement.

Everything in the book is based on actual events or conversations. Apart from the family itself, however, no character represents any single living person, but is entirely synthetic.

The author makes acknowledgment in grateful humility to his fellow-internees with whom he has so much in common that can never be truly shared with other people, and also to those in various parts of the world who effectively upheld this family and others in the camp by prayer and deep concern. He thanks particularly Michael L. Bevan for his helpfulness, and also the Dean of Hong Kong for his keen, though friendly criticism, his foreword, and the prayer he wrote during a time of dire need, part of which appears at the end of Chapter IV.

W. G. S.

SELY OAK, *Summer 1946.*

This book is for Vee, Joy and Guy because they really made it ; and also for Johanne who, like many friends outside the wires, was always with us in the deepest sense.

FOREWORD

By

THE DEAN OF HONG KONG

Some of the travellers to China and elsewhere who were caught in Hong Kong by the Japanese attack, and who suffered internment with us, were resentful at having to share the fate of a community to which they did not belong. A number of them obtained consolation of a sort by threatening to write in revenge a book about their experiences in Hong Kong. William Sewell, a member of the Society of Friends, was not of this number. He has given us a sympathetic and balanced picture of a community in defeat and internment as the background to the adventures and experiences of himself and his family. This was only possible because from the beginning he and his family identified themselves fully with the problems and hardships of the community into which they had been thrust. Their presence in Stanley Camp, and their share in its life, was a blessing to very many. How much we owed to the cheerfulness, sanity, friendship and faith of this Christian family! In those days of flux in all our standards and sanctions we needed clear patterns of life.

To some this book will be too cheerful an account of an imprisonment which they would describe as almost unmitigated wretchedness and futility. Yet the discerning reader will gather from hints here and there that there were uglier aspects of internment than the heartaches, privations and near-tragedies

FOREWORD

which are described in the book. There were cruelty, terror, things sordid and shameful, degradation and callousness. In ancient times the thunders passed harmlessly over the children of Israel, but in our camp not all received the same immunity from disaster. There were broken bodies, broken lives, broken hearts and broken faiths. And not all those who thus suffered could bring to bear on their loss the transforming power of the 'unconquerable hope'.

Yet in spite of this, there was manifested in the community, and I think made more available than in normal times, a quality of life which was nearer to eternal life. I used to wonder sometimes whether God ever could permit our release if it meant returning to the inferior quality displayed in our Hong Kong life of pre-war days. But Professor Sewell seems to be right when in his later chapters he shows that moral deterioration was spreading, and that as the years of internment went by, the community passed the point at which it was likely to be further strengthened and purified by suffering the same kind of things for a longer time. Imposing fear, humiliation and want upon a society for an unlimited period is no guarantee that steady reform in that society will be the result. And that is still true even if the society concerned contains an active Christian element.

I am glad that Professor Sewell does justice to the value and influence of the Christian fellowship in Stanley Camp. Without it life would have been much poorer and more ungracious, and moral deterioration would have been more serious.

A. P. ROSE.

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CHAPTER I

HONG KONG WAR

Reunited in Hong Kong—
war—refuge on Mount
Cameron—surrender on
Christmas Day, 1941



It is a wonderful thing for a family to be reunited after a long absence. It was the autumn of 1941, and I had flown from Chengtu in West China to Hong Kong where I anxiously awaited the overdue ship on which my wife and the children were coming from California. One Sunday, just after tea, they quite unexpectedly burst in. The door opened and there they all were: a confused jumble of children and dolls, with Mary pushing them along from behind. There was a moment of hesitation and wonder; then a wild shout of recognition and welcome, with a rush and confusion of kisses and hugs. Whether it was laughter or tears that drove all words away it is not easy to say. There they were: Vee, tall for eight, her black lashes longer than ever, two braids with great

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ribbons hanging over her shoulders ; Joy, two years her junior, loud, fat and noisy ; Guy, a rather timid, curly-haired child of four. Soon they were all shouting and talking at once, struggling to get at me. The words gradually sorted themselves out from the confusion :

" We can stay only two days " ; it was Vee's clear, bell-like voice. " A big plane brung us," said Guy, for the third or fourth time ; while Joy kept shoving a rubber doll into my face. " Look at her, Daddy. Isn't Pinkie sweet ? You haven't kissed her yet."

" Only two days," repeated Vee.

" It is true," said Mary, breaking in, quieting the children for a moment. " It was terribly difficult getting permission to come to Hong Kong. Women and children are really not allowed to land, and we have got a permit to stay only forty-eight hours." She was still the same Mary, I realized, now that I had a chance to look at her. There were streaks of grey in her naturally wavy hair, and on her face was a fleeting look of anxiety as though the sole care of a family in war-time was too heavy for her—but it was gone in a moment and her brown eyes were laughing with happiness. " So now it is up to you to get us out of here. My responsibility is over."

" Everything is ready," I assured her. " We are leaving tomorrow night."

" By plane ? " shouted Guy, while the others danced with enthusiasm.

" Yes, by plane, flying through the night to Chungking."

" They say there will be a war," broke in Joy, " a big war with the Japanese. That will be exciting, won't it ?"

The others didn't seem to be interested in the

possibility of war, though everyone in Hong Kong had been on edge for some weeks, fearing lest 'the balloon should go up'. I certainly would be thankful to get the family safely into Free China.

"What are we to sleep in? We have no luggage." Vee was obviously more concerned with the practical problems of the moment. "Have you any extra pyjamas? Mummy could use them."

"I haven't a thing," I confessed. "When I flew down from Chungking I brought as little as possible so that we could take more of your things into China. The planes don't allow very much."

"Our plane didn't allow us anything," laughed Mary. "We couldn't book a place on the Clipper, so we just went to the airfield on chance. Then after everyone was weighed in they said they could take us, but not our luggage. I could bring just one light thing. But the propellers were already turning, and in the excitement I chose that." Mary pointed dramatically to a blue hat-box on a mound of overcoats. "Some dried apricots and soup powder; a tin of milk powder and seven hats. Seven hats! Our clothes and the things we really want will follow on the next plane. I should have brought something more useful!"

"Don't worry," I said. Luggage was insignificant now they had come. "Chungking people will lend us things until yours arrive. We have only one night here, and Mrs Barrie will help."

Indeed she did. We were staying with the Barries in one of those old houses at the foot of the Peak, that overshadowing mount which dominates Hong Kong socially as well as topographically. George Barrie, a

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friend of our school and college days, had brought his enthusiasm for bugs and beetles to the East. His wife, Gladys, spent most of her time nursing, for without work of importance she would not have been allowed to remain, but would have been banished to Australia or Canada with so many other women and children who normally lived in the Colony. I had gone to stay with them, but much of my time was spent alone, cared for by their servants, for George was busy not only hunting down insect pests for the Government but also preparing to hunt down other foes. He was a Volunteer, feverish with last-minute training for the war with Japan which, despite the continued optimism of the few, now seemed inevitable.

When Gladys did come back from the hospital that Sunday evening she and the amah soon had our family comfortably settled for what was expected to be their first and last night in Hong Kong.

Next morning we were down for breakfast early. The large windows of the dining-room looked out over the busy harbour, already bright in the clear December sun. Below were the busy streets of the city: we could hear the shouts of Chinese coolies and the distant clatter of trams and traffic. Between the tall buildings of banks and offices could be seen the ships at anchor and the junks leisurely but persistently making their way about the waterways. A ferry was fussily bringing workers across to the island: even at that distance it was possible to make out a glare of bright-coloured clothes below a solid layer of black, bare heads. Beyond the ferry was Kowloon, the nine dragon city. There were the docks along the front, the typhoon shelter to the left, now peaceful, but a

reminder that at times the winds blew as though not nine but ninety dragons were doing their worst. Over Kowloon hung a haze from the early morning cooking, and towering above and behind it were the bleak hills, a hot reddish-brown in the early morning sunshine. The nine peaks were the petrified dragons, while beyond, over the territories loaned to the Hong Kong Government, was China; first a strip occupied by Japan over which we would fly in the darkness, and then Free China, land of our children's birth, land of our endeavour and of promise, where tomorrow we would be eating breakfast, happy with old friends.

"Help yourselves to milk and sugar," Gladys was saying to the children, seated round the great oak table. George was absent, he had not yet returned from his week-end manœuvres.

"Pop, crackle, snap!" shouted Joy delightedly, Vee and Guy echoing her words as they all put their ears to their plates, listening to the cereal dancing in the milk. "Pop, crackle, snap"—but the whole house was rocking, and the distant boom and thud silenced all the other noises of both house and city. Then all was quiet and once more the tumult of the streets surged forth.

"What was it?" asked Vee anxiously, her face suddenly white.

"War!" said Joy in a matter-of-fact tone, starting to eat.

"Bombs!" said Guy with satisfaction. "Will there be more? Bombs. Bang."

"It's probably the soldiers practising," I volunteered. We hid the anxiety we felt, while the children, careless of all else, happily ate their breakfast.

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After a time the telephone bell rang. "Missy, Master wantchee . . ." but Ah Lin never finished. Gladys had pushed past him and was at the 'phone. Mary and I met her at the door on her return. "George!" she said, her face tense, in answer to our unspoken question, "yes, it is war. Suddenly without warning, bombs on the airfield. George managed to 'phone, but now he is off with his detachment. He will try to get in, but he doesn't know if he can. I must go to the hospital and report. Make yourselves at home. Ah Lin, Amah, I go hospital, this Master, Missy stay here. You do anything they ask. Now tell Ah Sun get car . . ." and she was gone.

Only a few of the events of those days, after the sudden attack by the Japanese on that morning of December 8th until the surrender of the island fortress on Christmas Day, form part of this story. The whine of bombs, the rending crash of explosions, the thud of falling masonry, have been the common experiences of us all; the piercing cries and the moaning of the injured are a lasting memory; the frightened sobs of little children have seared our souls.

In the lull after the initial attack, our first thought had been escape to China, but the travel agencies had closed their doors, the offices of the aviation companies were open but deserted. Passenger traffic to Kowloon, where the airport is situated, was forbidden. In one of the few shops that were open we had been able to buy warm underclothes for the children, some slippers and some knitting wool. But when air raids started in earnest we kept off the streets as much as we could. At first we sheltered during raids in the Barries' cellar: an unsafe place at best. Then we sought one of the

near-by public shelters : a long tunnel in the rock, filled to an unbelievable extent with Chinese, who yet remained good-humoured and placid. The first night the shelling started, Mary and I, wrapped in light coats, climbed to the roof. It was a perfect night, mild, clear, with a moon so bright that not a star was visible. Near the most westerly of the petrified dragons behind Kowloon there was a flash, then the whistle of a shell which exploded with a burst of fire on the side of Victoria Peak more than a thousand feet above us. Again and again they came. It was not so good to be a target. We shivered and went down to bed.

A new tension came when Kowloon was captured by the Japanese. Hardly believing the turn events were taking, the British civilians were evacuated over to the island of Hong Kong which was to be held at all costs. After the civilians came the British troops, who took up new positions of defence along the island waterfront. That night we slept in the dug-outs below Government House, not far from the Barries'. The stifling atmosphere, the all-pervading cement and rock dust, made us physically exhausted ; but the children slept and it was for them we had sought shelter.

Gladys managed to return next day for half an hour. There was no more news of George, but she had no time for anxious brooding as the hospital was filled with wounded soldiers and civilians. She brought the suggestion that we should join her friend, Kate Shelley, in her home on Mount Cameron, one of the peaks that rise in the centre of Hong Kong island. We should

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be quiet there and it would be less exhausting for the children.

Kate arrived promptly with her car and we met one of Hong Kong's most striking women. Tall, business-like, fearless, she seemed to carry round with her something of the steadfastness of the Yorkshire moors on which she had been brought up. Like the moors, there was sometimes a gaunt but rather grand bleakness about her, but those that knew her realized the warmth of the purple heather in her heart ; her nature was golden as the October bracken.

"Come, it will be better for the children. I will take them and Mary now. You wait here ; I want your help." She had made her plans, and packed the family into the car with blankets from the Barries' beds. In half an hour she returned and we went to a Chinese comprador where, behind closed shutters, we bought all the tins and cases of food he would spare. These we packed into the car which was eventually so full that I had to walk.

The house on Mount Cameron was a refuge for others besides ourselves. Kate, a widow with two teen-age children, Maureen and Jack, had collected round her three or four American missionary families and one or two odd travellers who, like us, had been caught in Hong Kong. Kate's house was modern and spacious, but every scrap of bedroom space was occupied. One of the American families was camping in the sitting-room, while we put up camp-beds and made ourselves happy in the garage. In all there were eighteen children, who enjoyed themselves heartily, playing hide-and-seek about the garden and spending one or two hours a day at lessons.

The grown-ups spent most of their time helping Mrs Shelley's servants prepare the food, which we ate in two sittings in the glass-enclosed veranda, opening on the lawn and overlooking the sea south of Hong Kong. Kowloon and the city were hidden behind the hills, but far below us we could see the fishing village of Aberdeen, and the islands set like jewels in the blue ocean. We were away from the noise of warning sirens, and only when the Japanese aeroplanes zoomed overhead did the children have to come in from their play. With amazing regularity the planes came and dropped their bombs, seeking gun emplacements and the few destroyers which lurked near Aberdeen and in the shelter of the islands. They then retired to reload. We got to know their pilots' meal-times, and planned our own to correspond.

We were a community apart from the world. To our stocks of food we added perishable rations : butter, bread, tinned milk, sugar and meat, drawn from a depot. At first it was rather a jolly excursion, along the mountainside and across two gaps in the hills to the garage where the food was kept, but soon it became a nightmare. The Japanese advancing their gun positions on the Kowloon hills swept the roads in the gaps with shells. Kate and I went for the rations together ; she was the finest comrade with whom to be under fire. When we got to the end of the hillside cover, we would run across the exposed roads, or if firing was heavy, we would wait until a lull occurred and then make our rush, clutching our sacks, wildly thankful to get safely across. One day the shelling was particularly persistent. As we were starting to cross one of the gaps on our way home, a car was hit and

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burst into flames. Shell after shell swept the road while we hugged the hillside for safety. Kate had a bag of flour on her head for protection, while I nestled mine into a sack of provisions. At our feet was a trench with four tin hats neatly filling it. Their owners, four Chinese Volunteers, had sheepishly crawled out when ordered by the officer to make room for Kate, but had thankfully sunk back again when she refused.

"This is not a very happy situation," I couldn't help saying, as pieces of shrapnel fell around us, some of the larger pieces sliding down the hillside, starting a stream of pebbles.

"Who looks for happiness in this life?" replied Kate, and her words not only threw light on her character but were often to be remembered during the years that followed. "The mature Christian gets beyond seeking happiness, or even desiring it. There is a satisfaction in attempted right action even if it fails. There is too much to be done to worry about our individual happiness, which after all matters nothing."

The sun shone brilliantly as we pressed against the protecting hillside and kept pausing in our conversation as shells screamed and burst. "Now's your chance," the officer at last shouted to us during a lull. We ran quickly over the exposed roads with the food for ourselves and our neighbours.

When the electricity failed, the telephone and radio were silenced and our isolation on Mount Cameron was complete. With persistent aim, the Japanese shelled and destroyed the water mains of Hong Kong and our pipes ran dry. From a trickle in the rock behind the

house the children collected water, building a dam, that nothing should be lost. Then somehow we got news that the Japanese troops had crossed to the island. All around us the Canadian troops were gathering. "Now we are quite safe," one lady said to them ; but the answer was a growl, "Don't be too sure. We are the last defence."

The noise of guns and trench mortars grew daily nearer. Machine-gun parties stole past our house and sat a moment while we filled up their water-cans or gave them cocoa to drink. They would play with the children and give them chocolate and then at a word of command go silently up the hillside. "It is hell up there," one officer said quietly as he filled his canteen and was bidden good luck. "The Japanese are wizards with their mortars. It is certain death for most of us." Those who did crawl back were tired and beaten. They would drink silently and light a cigarette. Two men sank on the floor and slept half the morning before they even spoke. The tenseness of the situation was increased by a black pall over the island. The sun shone ominously red through the clouds from the burning oil tanks. There was a sense of impending disaster. Even the children's laughter seemed unreal, and the gramophone records they played again and again had an irritating artificiality.

By the evening of December 22nd the situation was so tense that we put the children to sleep in a kind of cellar below the veranda while we slept, fully clothed, on the floor above them. Outside on the lawn our soldiers were digging trenches. The constant explosion of shells, grenades, and the rattle of machine-guns did not keep us awake. About one in the morning we were

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roused by the soldiers. "We cannot hold the Japanese, and are abandoning Mount Cameron. The C.O. says you must come to the Peak."

A terrific explosion and shattering of glass helped to stir us to activity, and we were out on the road before long, each family looking after itself. The moon was just coming up and there was a faint light by which to see. A house on our left had been hit and was blazing. Guy was too tired to walk and I carried him on my back. His shoe kept coming off; the first time a soldier picked it up, the second time we found it and fastened it more securely, as he had no others. Vee got entangled with some barbed wire coiled along the road and tore her legs. She gave a half-sob, then checked it, though the blood was running down. Joy said nothing except "Let's get on," and we had to keep calling her back lest we should get separated from her in the *mêlée*. All around was the confusion of retreating troops. We threaded our way among them, dreading lest we should be caught in an attack before we had the children in safety. Miraculously, there was no firing at the gaps and we crossed them without alarm. After more than an hour's walk we reached the Peak itself.

We spent the rest of the night lying on the bare boards of a large house. We could see nothing in the blackness, but with a shaded torch we had been shown by others where we could sleep. Next morning we moved to yet another house, where there were several rooms free for our use. Kate had mysteriously vanished, though we had seen her the night before. She turned up smiling a few hours later with her car full of bedding and food. She had guessed that the

Japanese would not occupy Mount Cameron at once and so, quite by herself, had returned over the long and dangerous road, into the no-man's-land where her house stood. She had rescued her car, bringing back as chief treasure her Christmas pudding, and had met with no other adventures than a bullet through the back seat.

For the next two days we lost all feeling and lived like machines : the clouds of war pressed heavily upon us. The new house was just under the shelter of Mount Kellet, but all day long there was an intermittent rain of shells over us on to the batteries and oil stores below. The screaming shells seemed to be only a few feet above the terrace wall so that we instinctively cringed as they passed and then tried to make out from the burst of sand and rocks down below if any vital target had been hit. At intervals there were air raids ; and the children discovered the excitement of hunting shrapnel in the garden, until discouraged by burnt fingers. We were nearer the food depot than at Kate's own house, but the firing was more intense and the discomfort of collecting rations consequently greater. There was not a drop of water at the house, and it meant a scramble of nearly a quarter of a mile down the hillside to the nearest trickling stream. The risks were so great that all the water we carried was used only for cooking and drinking. Happily we discovered a large bottle of eau-de-Cologne as we foraged, so each of the eighteen children, from the oldest to the youngest, was rubbed down with it : at least we smelt pleasant, however grimy we might really be.

On Christmas Eve we were in an inferno. From burning oil below came volumes of dense black smoke.

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Other black clouds rolled over from the north, though overhead they were white. There was an incandescence from some burning houses which touched the light clouds with pink while the black became a foreboding blood-red with purple streaks as they billowed upwards. The children gathered in the house and together we sang carols, British, Chinese and American, Russian and Dutch. God's children, sheltering from the awful doom without, found peace around the humble Manger. Consciousness of the unhappy present slipped from us as we were caught up in the joy of the ageless Christmas spirit.

Christmas Day itself dawned with a message of hope. Chinese armies were approaching Hong Kong to relieve us. Japanese demands for surrender had again been refused. The island fortress would be held : there was no need for despair. Some of the people with us in the house, however, were very near despair. A young girl with a sick husband and a small baby was almost at her wits' end. But we made a special Christmas effort. Kate had a present for everyone, drawn from a pile of worthless treasures ; and the plum pudding was without compare. Amidst the whistling of the shells, the thud of exploding bombs, we ate our Christmas midday meal in a sheltered corner of the house. But a stick of bombs falling on the hillside brought down so much plaster that we abandoned the games we had planned. About four in the afternoon the plane returned ; and this time with a shattering crash incendiary bombs landed in the garden. All around us were globules of flame. We rushed to put them out, lest the hillside became a blaze. As the hum of the propellers died away we were aware of a new stillness.

Not a sound was heard. "We have surrendered," someone said. It was unbelievable. The strange hush was frightening.

Then suddenly we realized that the air was filled with the songs of birds. Cicadas on the trees were grinding remorselessly: for days we had never heard them. Nature, the beauty of the world around us, was there, unchanged, untouched by the storms that had brought such tragedy among men.

Next morning we rose early, packed what belongings we had into the car, and started the journey back to Mount Cameron. It seemed the only thing to do: there we had food and clothing, there we had water. With so many children it would be easier to face the unknown from a familiar base. Kate had it all planned out and it seemed so sensible that all agreed with her. As we passed we saw the great stone houses of the Peak war-torn and deserted. Near a hospital wounded Volunteers were gathered, and stared at us incredulously. There was not a Japanese anywhere: but where the Union Jack had so proudly flown, the white flag now fluttered shamelessly. At last we slowly crossed one of the gaps; everything was still deserted. We kept together for greater strength. First went the car laden with our possessions, some of the smaller children sitting on top, and then round it walked the rest of us, laden with bundles of bedding. Besides the eighteen children there were six Western adults and five Chinese friends and servants. It was like the trek of a modern Brigham Young.

At last we were at the final gap before Mount Cameron and home. We turned the corner. "Look, look!" shouted Guy and Joy together from the car.

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A sudden wave of emotion passed through us all. We were in the midst of soldiers. At once they sprang to us, revolvers drawn, bayonets flashing, and pushed us to a gutter at the side of the road. We crouched in it, captives of the Japanese.



My brother and I and I have
not yet seen ~~for~~ although
I have no ~~young~~
older brother to read
with and my
younger brother is

CHAPTER II

CAPTIVES

In Japanese hands—we live by our wits—encounters with our captors—Hong Kong after the surrender

From the gutter we quietly surveyed the scene. The Japanese were not really interested in us but in a group of Canadian soldiers who were squatting in the middle of the road. They had been rounding them up from the hillsides. Our men looked tired, dejected, hungry, though here and there some still had smiles. They eyed us and we eyed them, unable to speak, yet each anxious about the fate of the other. The sun was still brilliant, as it had been during the whole period of the Japanese attack. We pressed into the gutter, seeking for the narrow ribbon of shade the bank afforded. Our troops, many without hats, had no protection from the glare. Their well-made thick uniforms and heavy boots seemed oddly out of place. Bugged down with heavy equipment, what chance had they against the nimble foe? The Japanese, grimed with



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fighting, were in light rubber shoes, and looked almost grotesque in their camouflaged helmets ; the nets covering their heads and shoulders still held pieces of foliage. Their happy smiles of victory did not make us any less apprehensive. At a sharp bark of command, one of the men who was writing particulars about the Canadians, came over to us.

“ Name, business, any guns ? ” he hissed at us in one breath.

“ We want to go home. Home. These children—home ! ” We waved our arms at the children and pointed in the direction of the house, in an endeavour to make our innocent desires and intentions plain.

“ Your car ? ” was the snapped response.

“ Yes,” answered Kate. A couple of Japanese soldiers were summoned and at once began to throw its contents on the road. “ Let me help,” said Kate, “ if you want to see our things ” ; but a shout and a wave of bayonets made her sit back into the gutter again. When the car was empty, two of the Japanese excitedly got in, and after a little difficulty drove off to town. “ That is the end of that,” Kate whispered, “ but what will happen to us ? ”

Half an hour later the car, surprisingly, returned. We watched amazed as our things were put back into it. The officer wrote a note on a piece of paper, gave it to us, pointed along the road, and said in Japanese something that was clearly “ Be off with you ! ”

Without waiting we went. Our ragged procession re-formed and we moved as quickly as possible. Not until we were round the corner and hidden from the Japanese did we dare to consider what it was all about. We examined the paper and happily knew sufficient

Chinese characters to make out the meaning : These Westerners have assisted the Imperial Japanese Army in its conquest of Hong Kong.

A moment of amazement was followed by a burst of incredulous laughter. "What does it mean?" gasped Mary. "I suppose that little officer is puffed up with victory and just doesn't know what to do with us all. Anyhow this is a fine passport; let us go on to the house." We all agreed the document might be useful: it never occurred to us then that it might also need explaining to our friends.

We did not go very far, however, as round the next corner we were halted by two Japanese soldiers who looked unpleasant. They shouted at us, brandishing their weapons, but as we could understand no Japanese and they did not seem to be able to understand us, the situation was difficult. We stood quite still, hands raised, as they seemed anxious lest we had weapons. Our new document was read with interest. "Home, home," we said, pointing along the road; the end of it was that Kate and Jack Sneed, a jovial American missionary, the father of three of the children, went on with one of the soldiers in the car while the rest of us sat on a grassy bank and waited.

Backwards and forwards walked the guard, glowering at us. The Chinese women were most agitated. They remembered Nanking and were afraid; so we spread out in front of them to hide them, and one attractive young amah took down her hair and disarranged it to cover her face. Mrs Sneed was anxious about her two big girls. But the guard's main interest was jewellery, and he pointed his revolver first at one thing and then at another. Yet he must have been warned against

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looting, for he gave one or two Hong Kong notes, with which his pocket was stuffed, for everything he took.

"More than that," said Mary, trying to parley over her wedding ring for which the Japanese was offering ten dollars, but he shook his head with a snarl and she had no choice but to hand it over. Those at the other end of the line, seeing what was happening, hastily hid their rings in their clothes. I managed to work my wristlet watch over my elbow, and despite a number of searches, wore it safely there for the next two months.

Time wore on and we were very hot and hungry. The children were clamouring for a drink. The guard lost interest in us and retired to examine his spoils. A few yards away we discovered some boxes of stores left by the Canadian soldiers. There were cases of milk and a case of cheese. We started to prise open the lids, but the noise attracted the Japanese. By signs we showed him that the children were hungry and then he himself investigated the boxes, slashing the milk and the cheese tins with his bayonet, scattering the contents. He gave some tins to us and we slaked our thirst with evaporated milk, and ate some cheese.

At last the car returned. "It's no use," cried Kate emphatically as she and Jack got out. "The house is being used as headquarters for this district. But the Japanese were very decent, especially when they saw our 'passport'. They may move into the city tomorrow or the day after and then we can return. Meanwhile, we may live in any of these houses we like; they are all empty except one occupied by some Norwegians and one by a Swiss."

The Japanese officers, Kate said, had favoured a house near their main post at the gap as it would be

easier to protect us there, but we felt we should be better farther from the soldiers and nearer our old home. Our immediate problem, however, was food, so we went to see what we could find at one of the large houses, where friends of Kate had lived before the attack. Others had been there before us, but we discovered some Bovril and an old tin of powdered milk. Unhappily the taps were dry ; there was not a drop of water anywhere. Vee excited us all by shouting she had got some, but the bottles she innocently flourished were only gin.

It was lack of water that drove us eventually to the Norwegians' house, as they were near a spring and also not far from Kate's own home, though safely out of sight. Hospitably their doors were thrown open to the twenty-nine of us and we settled in a large porch and hall where the Canadian troops had recently been billeted. Our food problem was also over, as just near was a Canadian army kitchen with sufficient leavings to feed us all for several days.

We lay low and waited, not allowing the children to stir beyond the garden, fearing lest they should meet Japanese soldiers. Periodically we sent out scouts to see what was happening at Kate's house. One morning the report came that it was deserted ; cautiously we investigated and then returned in force to tidy up.

Not a man was left : but what a mess ! Curtains had been torn down and together with rugs stuffed into the hastily-built trenches in the garden. The contents of drawers had been tipped on to the floor and trampled upon ; our stores had been discovered, and cases of raisins emptied on to the carpets, tins of fruit or milk, slashed open, had their contents poured into the heap,

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which by the tread of the conquerors had been reduced to an indescribable mess. It was startling that men of a race which had seemed eager to conform to the conventions of modern hygiene should so befoul the toilets and, through their use of open windows, smear the outer walls with filth. Kate took one look—and in that moment she was near to tears. “It is no use looking,” she said, with an obvious effort, as she surveyed the wreckage of her beautiful home; “let’s get busy, and clean up.”

The water shortage did not make this easy, but within two days we were settled again in a clean if much simpler and barer home.

The days that followed belonged to a new and an unreal world. Each felt that a chapter of life had been closed and a new one opened in a manner which seemed to bear little relationship to the old. There was a freshness about the early January mornings, but the sun was bright and warm for the rest of the day. We lived as much as possible in the garden and were almost entirely isolated from our fellows. Mrs Sneed had organized school for the children while the rest of us kept the community fed. A few of our stores had been left by the Japanese, but we had to forage to maintain supplies. One of the Chinese women wrote a note in simple Chinese characters: We have eighteen children, may we have some food? Then we had two more papers to show to sentries we might meet. One said: Please may I pass to buy food for my family? The other was for use on the return: Please allow me to go to my home which is on this road. They proved invaluable. The first one helped when parties of Japanese soldiers were clearing away Canadian army stores.

They gave us several cases of evaporated milk and cheese, corned beef and vegetables, which we dragged with joy back to our home where Kate stored or used them as seemed best.

We went several times along the hillside to the Peak to collect food from the depot which was still open. We had to pass two lots of sentries, one in each gap ; and we went with a certain amount of fear. We bowed politely, an art which was easy for us as we had lived so long in the interior of China, and felt it a natural courtesy and not a sign of humiliation as it seemed to Hong Kong dwellers. Our papers were read with interest, and usually after a search of our clothing we were allowed to pass. Sometimes we were made to stand at the side of the road while our case was considered ; once there was great excitement and brandishing of revolvers, but it turned to laughter when it was discovered that the cause was a candle and not a secret weapon in my coat pocket. Through all these encounters we could say nothing, and remained as passive as possible while the Japanese shouted orders and talked words we could not understand. Only once were we actually prodded with bayonets, and that was because our indignation had got the better of us after watching a poor Chinese family being beaten and robbed of their watches and trinkets.

The group of Westerners on the Peak were not too happy. They were anxious about the future, and possible internment, and fearful of the present because of armed bands of Chinese looters against whom they had no real protection. There were endless discussions of the cause of Hong Kong's defeat ; and compensatory rumours of a speedy relief were already in wild circula-

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tion. We always felt a sense of calm and peace when with our sacks of food we returned to our own home. We grew less and less to depend on these trips for food, and instead we rifled the empty houses round about us. While the Japanese were eating their meals, we systematically searched the houses on Mount Cameron to rescue any food we could discover. There was special joy when we found two great baskets of potatoes, each weighing over two hundred pounds, but it was a struggle getting them back over nearly half a mile of road. From the gardens we gathered lettuces and vegetables for salads ; once we found a piece of ham in a servants' cellar.

We were always liable to have Japanese appear on our doorstep. "Visitors, visitors," our look-out would cry. The big girls knew it was a signal for them to vanish to a little room at the top of the house ; the smaller children, our three among them, clustered round the door. Sometimes it was a gendarme come to get particulars of our names, ages, sex and nationality ; sometimes it was just officers or men off duty having a look round their newly acquired territory. They usually demanded food ; and to forestall them and as an act of courtesy, we offered tea at once. With natural oriental politeness they then became more gracious. They played with the small children for hours, or strummed on the piano. Sometimes they went into the garden to practise shooting old tin cans with their revolvers. They wielded their ancient family swords with greatest skill, shaving old bits of leather, and we learnt not to shiver when they smiled and said dramatically, "Neck more better." Official systematic looting became common ; gangs of Chinese coolies with

a Japanese officer would drive up on a lorry and remove furniture and fittings from the empty houses, presumably to send them to Japan.

One day everyone was out except some of the older children, Jack and Alice Sneed, and Miss Robinson, an elderly American tourist who had been caught in Hong Kong. Unexpectedly two wild and unkempt Japanese soldiers opened the door and walked in, revolvers in their hands. Their raucous shouts filled the house. "A child, cannot someone produce a child?" cried Miss Robinson in dismay. "I am sorry," answered Jack Sneed, trying to calm her, "but we have had three. Like Sarah we can only laugh." But it was no time for levity. The Japanese looked at the Canadian Army mattresses which were on the floor and said "Canada soldiers," and obviously suspected that troops were hidden. "Children, many children," the Sneeds kept repeating, but the men only shook their heads and demanded soldiers. They commenced to search the house. Soon the older girls were found. "Only children here, no soldiers," Miss Robinson insisted. But the soldiers counted the people in the house, "One, two . . . five . . . eight," and then the beds: "Twenty, twenty more. . . ." Happily, just as things were getting to a climax Kate and the rest of us returned. It required only a moment for Sneed to explain the situation to us. "Feed them," declared Kate, "this demands our best chocolate"—and very soon she had them fed. The two unpleasant men spent the rest of the day teaching the children Japanese tunes on the piano, while they learnt to play *God save the King*, with one finger.

It wasn't only the Japanese whom we fed. Some-

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times there came isolated groups of British soldiers who had not been rounded up and who were wandering on the hillsides. We gave them cocoa and food but never encouraged them to stay too long, for we knew what to expect if the Japanese discovered that they had been. One group of Indians, escaped from a hospital, was a special anxiety. They enjoyed the children so much that they would not leave us. Then when they were departing they decided to investigate some Canadian army stores at our very doors, and to their delight and our amazement, discovered a case of Christmas puddings. With shrieks of joy, they burst open some tins and not liking them very much, they started rolling the rest down the hillside. Jack Shelley, who was our scout, reported that Japanese were coming along the road; the Indians reluctantly vanished in the undergrowth.

We just had time to tidy up the mess and get about twenty puddings into our store before the Japanese arrived. This time it was a lorry of soldiers with a Chinese driver. I was returning to the house with a bucket of water and was stopped. The Japanese demanded drinks. "But no," I answered, "this water is not boiled and it is very dirty." They insisted however. "Never mind," said the Chinese driver leaning out towards me, "they no understand English. Give them plenty drink, if they all ill and die, all very good," and he solemnly drove off.

While we were living in isolation on Mount Cameron, things were not going as well for our compatriots in Hong Kong. Down in the dusty crowded streets there were countless problems and irritations which Gladys Barrie's forethought had spared us. Finally, at the

shortest notice, all the British, their allies and dependants were mustered on a parade ground, and then crowded into Chinese hotels so that the Japanese could give them, as they said, protection and food. In descriptive phrase, attributed by rumour to Mr Churchill, they were "driven like sheep, herded like cattle, fed like swine". Under indescribable conditions of overcrowding the people were packed into eastern hotels which had no adequate accommodation; many had never possessed a reputation for cleanliness and comfort. Food was insufficient and sanitary conditions appalling. The Japanese appeared to have no means of caring for so many people, and showed no desire to ease the situation if they had.

Leaflets had fluttered from the sky one day: All British will gather on the Murray Parade ground on. . . . But the time was already past so we decided it was not for us. A gendarme officer who had previously inspected us demanded that afternoon: "All the British are segregated but why are you here?" We replied how willing we were to obey but the distances were great, our children many, perhaps the Japanese would send us cars? However he had merely turned and walked away.

Two days later two staff cars drew up and out stepped a major in smart uniform, with several subordinates in attendance. Their swords swung noisily and their heavy leather boots clattered on the doorstep. "You must all gather." The order was given in English. This was different from any previous encounter and we became tense as we sensed the anxiety of the moment.

"You are all here?"

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“ Yes.”

“ How many ? ”

“ Twenty-four, eighteen children.” The Chinese had left us several days before.

“ Why are you here ? All British and Americans were ordered to muster and are segregated. You have broken martial law.”

The officer was stout, and very short. Gold on his shoulders and black braid round his sword made his self-importance seem all the more ridiculous. We stood in a ring round him, looking down at him. Some of the bigger girls, feeling embarrassed, began to snigger. The Japanese glared angrily ; no one answered him. An order to the guard to come from the doorway to arrest or shoot us seemed inevitable. There was a sudden movement in the front of the ring and a small voice broke the tense silence. “ I’m Guy, how are you ? ” There was a roar of laughter as the tension snapped, while Guy shrank, shamed to tears. But relief had come. “ So you are Guy,” said the Japanese, patting him on the head, “ and who are all the others ? ”

We left him to the children while we made the inevitable tea. He sat on the edge of a chair, sipping it ; his sword stuck out awkwardly into the room. “ It will be bad for these children in the hotels,” he announced. “ Later everyone will go to some camp for segregation, but it will be hard at first. Have you enough food if you stay here ? ”

“ Yes, we can manage,” we assured him, though in truth we hardly knew how we could ; and the Major left with his men, promising to call again. That same evening he was back with two sacks of rice, half a

dozen tins of army hard-tack, and a box of sweet cakes for the children.

Next day a frightened Chinese photographer arrived with a Japanese guard. By twos and threes he photographed us all, and then a few days later we each received a Japanese military pass allowing free movement in Hong Kong. We celebrated the arrival of the passes by a trip to the Peak and found there a group of Britishers who like us had not gone to the hotels. When the Japanese had realized the difficulties of coping with so many people, they allowed them to remain until all should be interned. However, they were confined to their district where there was still a food depot and received no passes.

Once or twice a week the Major came, usually bringing some candies or presents for the children. The smaller girls made bouquets, and he would depart holding his flowers, his face wreathed in smiles. There are no enemies under the age of eight, and it is the children who may guide our feet into the way of peace.

Once he asked, "What do you want today, children?" It was the cheeky Joy who said to him, "My daddy needs a hair-cut." Later in the day a crestfallen Chinese arrived, saying he had instructions to cut our hair. He spent a good day with us. Food and a little friendship changed his manner. What were his charges we asked him. "Nowadays very bad," he replied dolefully, "Japanese no pay money. Before I cut white man one dollar fifty. I no charge you"; but we gave him a present, sent him to our Norwegian and Swiss neighbours, and at last he went happily home.

Now we had passes we were in a more secure position, but we grew to dread the visits of the Major and other

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Japanese wanderers, because we had a man to hide. One dark night there had been moaning outside our window and scratching at the door. A Chinese lay there. He and some friends had been attacked by Japanese sentries at the gap. Whether his companions were alive or dead he did not know. He had been torn about the legs and arms by bayonet thrusts, and had thrown himself into the underbrush, crawling blindly away from the scene. Then at night he had seen the lights of our house and had made his way to us. He was desperately ill ; we carried him upstairs to a little room in the servants' quarters where we hid him on a camp-bed behind a barricade of boxes. From the undergrowth along the road to the house we discovered a trail of blood which we covered as best we could ; and we hoped and prayed that Mr X, as we called our unknown guest, would not be discovered as he lay either unconscious or moaning between life and death in the little room. Gradually he recovered, until one night, just before we ourselves left, he crawled away to join his friends in the town below.

The days were growing colder, and besides school and foraging for food, all who were able commenced to sew. We had found a case of Canadian hospital-blue coats and trousers, and these were being unpicked and re sewn as slacks for children and jackets for the women. No one went far these days. With our passes we had wandered a little more freely, but after some of the girls came across two Canadians dead nearly three weeks, and not two hundred yards from home, no one felt like exploration. We had buried the boys as best we could ; but now we watched with uneasy hearts the ' buzzards ' wheeling over the hills.

We knew that before long we should have to be interned so we started to gather what we could in preparation. At first we had felt guilty as we ransacked our neighbours' houses and rifled the Canadian Army stores, despite the invitation from a major, who had wandered to our house after the surrender, that we should help ourselves. We had been brought up to believe Collodi's Firefly when he warned Pinocchio that, "Hunger is not a good reason for appropriating what does not belong to us". These things, however, were now said by the Japanese to belong to them, and their claim was easily disallowed. There were dumps of Canadian stuff around us. First one batch of Japanese would come and pick them over, then another would make a selection. In between we gathered what we needed—raincoats, wash-basins, tools and bowls. The children ran a 'shop' for smaller things at the side of the garden. Everything a thoughtful soldier might require was there—needles and thread, notebooks and pencils. The pathetic half-written letters that could never be sent, and the countless photographs of the unnamed loved, so many of whom would wait in vain, were tenderly collected and burnt.

Miss Robinson, the American tourist, with white bobbed hair and piercing eyes that glistened through large horn-rimmed glasses, developed an unerring instinct for discovering what we wanted. It was she who found the elastic for the children's panties and the wool to knit a sweater for Guy. "Wherever did you get it?" asked Maureen Shelley, jealous of the find. "Was it in the dump or in one of the boxes, or in someone's house?" But Miss Robinson only shook her head and murmured "This brings out the worst

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in people ! ” We never knew where she went ; but from time to time she would shake her head and say, “ War does bring out the worst.” Then we would glance at each other and know that she had been on one of her expeditions or that something had been transferred from our communal store to her private bags. First it was the Oxo that vanished and then the aspirin. Jack Shelley, our amateur detective, won them back with many another treasure.

Towards the end of January, the Sneed children, Kate and I decided to visit the Peak. On the previous day looters had fired several of the houses along our way. The charred remains and bombed ruins seemed more pathetic than usual. When we arrived we found everyone excited. “ We are going to Stanley,” they said. We watched several parties leave, packed tightly into trucks, while some trudged with a few possessions on their backs down to the city and the jetty. We learnt that those who had been herded into the hotels had already been moved to the internment camp : when would our turn come ? As the remaining food was being taken from the depot into camp there was none for us, so we sat and watched, keeping a wary eye on any Japanese soldiers for fear lest they should force us to go too. A lorry passed us with the last patients from a hospital, our friend the superintendent sitting in their midst. “ Heh ! ” he shouted to us, “ if you want food there is some in the hospital store. Help yourselves ! ”

“ Thank you, doctor,” we replied together, springing to our feet and making at once for the great stone building. In other days we had tip-toed through its passages and wards with considerable awe, for it was

enveloped in an aura of the sternest hospital tradition : this time with careless sacrilege we raced here and there, seeking the basement and the store. At last the door was found and opened. We stood there speechless ; then with a roar pounced upon treasure in that Aladdin's cave. It was beyond our wildest dream : butter, tin piled on tin, sugar, treacle, candles, and salt, toilet necessities of every kind. Feverishly we filled our gunny sacks, only to discover in mad despair that we could not lift them to our shoulders let alone drag them the two full miles to home. In agony we discarded first this then that, striving with fevered minds to make a wise selection. The Sneed girls wept as they saw the pile they wished in vain to carry. All the way home, their sacks still too heavy for them, and with rolls of toilet paper strung round their necks, they bickered and squabbled because of the things they had left. One of us returned next day only to learn that half an hour after we had gone Chinese looters had arrived and stripped the store-room bare.

The Major came to see us ; we gathered round him in apprehension lest we were to lose our freedom. " You must leave the Peak," he said to us. " No British may live here now, just as you would allow no Chinese to own a house upon it. But the internment camp is not well ordered yet ; it is too soon to take the children."

It was decreed that we should move next day to a house in Bowen Road, away down the other side of the range, just above the city. We packed all night and when the truck came for us we were ready. It made three trips and we took with us all that we hoped

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to take to Stanley. To those of us who were homeless the going was easy, but to Kate Shelley it was a break with all her roots. It would have been easier for her to go straight to internment, but for the sake of our freedom she never allowed her own feelings to be considered. Emotions were forgotten in activity as we settled into our new home. It was filled with shattered glass from bomb explosions. It had not been looted, because the near-by house overlooking the harbour was being used by the Japanese Navy.

The sailors from this signal station soon became our constant visitors. Their officer, whom we named the Admiral, had obviously been told to keep an eye on us ; he did his duty well. They understood hardly half a dozen words of English between them, and when they arrived all work was at a standstill. We had to sit with them and replenish their tea-cups and try to talk. Miss Robinson and Mrs Sneed were our conversationalists, but their remarks were not really intelligent, and consisted chiefly of expressively waved hands, and shouts growing louder and louder in an attempt to make their meaning understood.

Mrs Sneed (having at last thought of another harmless subject) : " Mosquitoes in Japan ? Yes ? "

The Admiral : " Mosquitoes—what thing ? "

Miss Robinson : " Mosquitoes, mosquitoes you know, bite, big lump ? No ? "

Mrs Sneed : " Mosquito, you have, yes ? "

The Admiral (finding it better to keep the conversation in his own hands) : " The donkey, she go away. Donkey gone—stolen."

And so it went on, hour after hour.

The loss of the donkey, however, was a real calamity.

The Japanese had found it straying on the hillside and frequently invited the children down to have rides upon it. It was my job to go too just in case there might be trouble. While the Admiral used to hiss pleasantly at me, I was not truly welcomed. Although he himself said nothing, his sentries would never let me pass a certain path. "Though it is silly of them," said Vee, who like the other children was free to wander anywhere. "They have nothing but a lot of silly guns over there."

One of the sailors had a bright idea. He placed, one day, a bundle of wool and some needles in Miss Robinson's lap. "Scarf," he said invitingly, "so big; so long": and from that time Miss Robinson was busy. "Perhaps they will give me some shoes," she told us. "Not that I am knitting with that motive," she added a trifle hastily.

The children enjoyed their romps with the sailors, who were but children themselves. After one particularly happy afternoon, however, cries of pain were heard from the garden below. On the lawn some poor Chinese, probably found cutting wood or trespassing, was being beaten and kicked to death, our so-pleasant Admiral directing operations. This explained sounds we had heard from time to time. A gloom fell over us all. Next day when the sailors arrived with their usual friendly smiles and cakes, the bigger girls hid theirs: "I cannot eat their food," said Maureen Shelley, voicing their indignation; "it sticks in my throat. I would rather starve." Idealism was not so well developed in the boys, who benefited by the share the girls had left.

Victoria, the city of Hong Kong, looked from our

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new home very much the same as before the war, though no junks spread their fairy sails in the lovely harbour, and sunken ships raised their derelict masts and smoke stacks above the clear blue water. But when Sneed, Mary and I visited the streets themselves we were amazed at the transformation. The clean, well-kept and ordered British colony had become a Chinese city. The English signs had been torn down, the roads were lined with little stalls, and hawkers, many of them schoolgirls with pale, drawn faces offered their wares from wicker baskets. We bought milk-powder and Oxo and a thermos flask, then moved from the anxious crowds to see if we could find trace of Gladys Barrie at her home, where we had lived during the early days of fighting. All was barred and deserted, however. At the gate was a pile of garbage from which protruded the head and shoulders of a tiny baby's body. We shivered and turned our way home through the side streets, past a seemingly endless line of ill, unhappy people waiting to buy rice, past dead coolies who had been shoved into the gutter until the disposal squad should come. From the windows of a hut used as a Government office, where only some weeks before I had been with papers, Japanese army mules surprisingly and a little significantly looked out. On the outskirts we passed bands of Chinese looters, gathering firewood or stripping houses of their floor-boards and fittings. They were not deterred by the bodies of their more luckless fellows who had been caught and shot. Two men who had been bound to a gate were being tortured by some soldiers. Their piteous cries seemed not to affect the living who waited to hurry with their loot across the open street when the soldiers' backs

were turned. "One is thankful that at last the body dies," said Sneed in a calm after a heart-rending cry. We hurried by the dell where lay the bodies of Indian soldiers, swollen and black with flies. The air in our home seemed purer, but the fetid breath of the conquered city still hung about our nostrils.

"I am ready for internment," I said, dropping my gunny sack of purchases into a corner. "The time has come when we shall be better in a camp"—and all agreed. None of us however had any information about conditions in the camp itself, though wild and unpleasant rumours were about. Our position there, we felt, would be clearly defined, if hard; whereas over Bowen Road there hung a cloud that was unclean. Through the Admiral's pleasant smiles there was a glint of something sinister and most cruel. True, we had some material comfort, but as Mary said, relieving the tension which was growing among us, "I can no longer sleep on these lovely beds for thinking that soon we won't have comfortable beds to sleep in."

At the beginning of the second week of February a short note came from the Major, and it was the last we heard of him. It said: Day after tomorrow, you will be interned.



CHAPTER III

INTERNEED



February 1942, we move to Stanley—our reception—we learn to share a room with others

One five-ton truck even if it makes two journeys is not very adequate when it has to hold twenty-four

people and all their possessions. However, we were much better off than those who had been marched to the jetty with just the few things they could carry. We also were spared the crowded and exposed journey by sea to the south of Hong Kong where Stanley is situated. We went over high winding roads across the island. We climbed until city and harbour were below us, so far away that war damage and evil sights were indiscernible in the enchanted world in miniature bordered to the north by the Kowloon Hills. Then as we crossed the gap and descended the hillside a new panorama was spread before us: the great blue sea, and set in it the island gems, Lamma to the west and the Lemas before us. Below was Repulse Bay and west of that the Stanley Peninsula with the two great bays, Deep Water and Tytam.

The little fishing village of Stanley nestled to the west of the narrow neck joining the massive peninsula

to the mainland. We passed the green-tiled Mary Knoll Seminary and the modern villas, gay in the sunshine, despite their desertion ; but when we came to the village itself we were sharply halted at the gendarmerie headquarters. We had been stopped several times on the journey by sentries, but not until now was any strictness shown.

“ Dismount ! Who are you ? ” We clambered down and showed our Japanese military passes. These softened the tone of the solitary Japanese official, but it seemed there had been no co-ordination between the Japanese who were sending us, and those in charge of the camp. “ Are you coming here voluntarily, or are you sent ? ” We tried to explain who we were, but it was almost as difficult to get into the camp as, once admitted, to get out again. Finally, after a wave of his hand, his Indian and Chinese gendarmes fell upon us. The women were taken into a little room where a Chinese wardress searched them. The Indians ran their hands over us and through our pockets. “ Open everything ” ; we gazed in dismay at the piled truck. It would take the rest of the day if all that had to be examined. “ Sorry, sir,” said a kindly renegade Indian, “ but there was a big row as some in the camp had army stuff, such as oilskins.” He glanced at our bundles wrapped in Canadian ground sheets. Our hearts sank, as apart from army things we had so very little. However, by this time the Sneed children had started talking to the Japanese in a mixture of Cantonese and English : he had evidently forgotten us. The Indians seemed as loath as we were to start the examination, so we stood around staring at each other for a few minutes ; then, as our driver was

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anxious to return to town for his second trip, we climbed back into the truck. The Sneeds were the last to get on ; we drove off while they were still chatting with the Japanese, who had been a clerk in a bank at Canton, where they used to live.

The truck went slowly over a shallow ditch in the road and through a narrow gateway. We were behind barbed wire.

The Stanley Internment Camp for British and Allied Civilians lay just beyond the village where the low-lying neck of land begins to widen out and to rise at the foot of the bold peninsula on which British forts and barracks have been built. Stanley itself was the scene of the earliest British settlement on the island, but was so malarious that it had been abandoned by Westerners. However, after proper mosquito control, the district became safe, and the Anglican St Stephen's Boys' College was built beyond the village. Later a modern prison was erected farther to the south-east, by the sea. It was in the college, its teachers' bungalows and the flats and residences of the prison officers and Indian and Chinese warders that the internees were housed. We drove slowly along the main asphalt road towards the massive prison gates, and then turned off to some open garages at the centre of the camp itself.

We were in a new world : a European's world. Little groups were sitting on the lawns enjoying the sunshine. Children were drilling upon the tennis courts. Willing hands helped us unload our baggage ; and then we sat and waited for those in charge to tell us where to go.

Accommodation was evidently a problem. The billeting officer scratched his head thoughtfully, and

with wrinkled brows hunted through the lists he carried. "Of course you won't get privacy, you know that?" he said to us. "But we will try to keep families together." For the Americans there was no problem; they were housed in a special section of the camp; we felt the bonds of intimate association snap as we bade farewell to the Sneeds, Miss Robinson and the other Americans. Group by group, our friends were led away; but our family of five presented a more difficult problem. At last the solution was discovered. Hungry and tired after the long day's exposure to the hot sun, we were taken to the married quarters—a rectangle of well-built modern flats built on a levelled spur of hill overlooking the prison. Through the sandbagged entrance of Block I we passed, and up the stairs to Flat 15. The door of the large living-room was opened and we entered our new home.

We stood transfixed inside the doorway. Our arms were laden with our smaller sacks, while beyond us helpers were bringing some of the larger things. We could not go forward for the room appeared already full. Six camp-beds took most of the space, while round the edges of the room were suit-cases, bottles, a few pots and pans, two or three chairs, and wedged between the beds, some small round tables. Sitting on chairs and beds were five people eating rice from bowls or plates. They stopped their meal and glared suspiciously at us. "Well, what do you want?" shouted one of the women at last. "You cannot come in here." She was short and stout, her black hair, dark brown eyes and high cheek bones marking her obviously as a Eurasian. "This room is taken," said another woman with anger in her voice.

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We saw that there were three women and two men. Obviously we were unwanted. "This is nonsense," the billeting officer shouted over our shoulders, "the room holds ten and there are only five here now. You will have to make room." Going in before us, he explained the position, threatening to bring in the Chinese who was in charge of these quarters for the Japanese. Grudgingly the people moved and cleared a small space near a large central door opening on to the veranda. Here we deposited our luggage.

"It is a shame bringing children in here. We are elderly people and we don't like children," said one of the women in a loud voice to the room in general. She was a small middle-aged woman, her lips heavily rouged, her face carelessly made up. Mrs Johns was aggressive and determined, in sharp contrast to her rather stupid-looking husband who sat meekly on the side of a bed with her. "Yes," agreed Mrs Nita Goldburn, the Eurasian woman who had first spoken, "it is a shame, pushing people in like this, just as we were settling."

Mary, who was helping the children pile their sacks, could keep silence no longer. "Do you suppose we want to come in with you?" she asked. "Obviously it would be better to have the children in a room of our own. What a fine welcome this is; as if we wanted to share any more than you do!" For a moment it was doubtful whether she was going to weep or laugh at our reception.

"Of course," said Mrs Goldburn, a deep-seated Chinese desire to put the newcomers at ease finally finding its way to the surface, "it isn't your fault. It's all this war. But elderly people like Miss Addy, my

sister here, and Mrs Johns want quiet, especially after all they've gone through. Children must be noisy. But let's make the best of a bad job ; I'll help you." And she did ; becoming from that moment a staunch ally.

As we contemplated our things stacked in the recess made by the middle doorway to the veranda, we realized that we possessed pitifully little, though on the Peak and at Bowen Road it had seemed quite adequate. However, there we were in houses with fittings we could use. Here we had nothing except what we had brought. It was quite impossible to unpack, though we hunted for our bowls and spoons, and the few necessities of our daily life. Our folded blankets and padded Chinese quilts, or *mintois*, we stacked on the Canadian army mattresses which were to be our seats by day and our bed by night. They took up a very small portion of the floor, which was just over twenty feet long by fourteen feet broad.

Captain and Mrs Johns sat staring at us, Elsie commenting to her husband on the quantity of 'some people's' stuff. Mr Goldburn, a scruffy man who had been used to bossing 'Chinamen' on the docks, and drifting from one bar to another, had left to see if there was anything he could scrounge. Miss Addy, the Snake, as the children came to call her later, stood glaring at us, while Nita Goldburn helped, making practical suggestions about the management of our affairs, and explaining how we drew our rations from 'the queue'.

We shared our last sandwiches with our room-mates, and in a bid for peace, gave presents of tea and coffee to them all. We tried to avoid any declaration of our

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rights to half the room, but to win by friendship those among whom we had to live. Darkness soon fell, so we had to spread our bedding without delay. This meant, however, a further bid, this time for space on the jealously guarded territory of the floor, as obviously we could not sleep sitting on our piles of bedding. Gradually we manœuvred the mattresses out from the walls ; they were each about two feet broad and two and a half feet long. Eventually we got nine of them down flat, winning a space seven feet six inches by six feet, which became ours by right of conquest. True, one of the mattress corners was bent up against Em Addy's bed, which she defied us to move ; but by imperceptible degrees we slid it from us and got our mattress flat, though in future she stepped upon our blankets every time she went to or from her bed. Finally, Nita made her magnificent gesture : she offered us her extra bed for Vee. For a time she demanded its use by day, but eventually it became recognized as Vee's own.

Joy and Guy we put into the middle of our mattress bed, and later Mary went on one side and I lay on the other edge with the wriggly children in between us. Not that there was much sleep that night. In the blackness Joy and Vee were sick, probably because of the excitement and the long exposure to the sun. In the restless darkness, cramped by the unyielding floor, I tried to plan our life so that it would be worth living despite the strange environment into which we had been thrust. " Always plan in any situation as though it were to last indefinitely " was Jack Sneed's recipe for general happiness. " Even if you move on early, nothing is lost." It was a nightmare to picture this crowded room as our home for an indefinite time !

Food was, of course, the most important thing both in the camp and in our room. Twice a day the kitchen served dry boiled rice and a vegetable or meat stew. There was not much of it and it was far from palatable. The rice was dirty, and it tasted musty ; there were no proper utensils in which to wash it clean. The wood the Japanese supplied was poor and would not easily burn in the improvised stoves. The hours of serving were therefore frequently delayed beyond the supposed times of 11.30 for the first meal and 5.30 for the second. Ration cards, to be checked each meal, were issued as so many people had been discovered drawing several rations and leaving insufficient to go round ; but even so the queues of hungry people formed early, those who were last running the risk of going short or even having to do without. Mary and I stood between four and a half and five hours each day waiting for our food or boiling water, which was issued at irregular intervals.

A moral problem arose over the food we had brought in. It had all gone to the Sneeds in the American quarters, and waited distribution. It was not a vast amount but what there was of milk, tinned meat and vegetable was invaluable. Should we keep it for ourselves, or was it right that we should share it ? If from the very beginning the camp could have been run on true communal lines there would have been no question. We could all have shared and shared alike in a great experiment, supplementing by our own efforts the limited supplies the Japanese sent to us. However, this was not to be. Insecurity and lack of supplies caused nearly everyone to think first of himself ; there was no infectious wave of generosity in Stanley. While some from the beginning shared what

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they had, most men and women, many of whom had lost loved ones, nearly all of whom had lost the accumulated material treasures of a lifetime, were too dazed for economic or social experiment and adventure. Their one desire was to keep alive until they should be free once more. They clung to what they had so as to supplement the inadequate rations supplied by the Japanese. Our food put into the communal kitchen would have gone nowhere among the three thousand in the camp ; in our own room we discovered it was an unwritten law neither to offer nor to receive, lest jealousy should be fostered or obligations made. We felt happier when we found that the Goldburns and the Johns, who had Chinese friends and relatives in Hong Kong, received parcels of food and were better off than we were. We kept our food in trust for our family and to share with those who were in greater need. Nevertheless we were conscious of a sense of failure that all things were not held in common.

Goldburn, we soon found, was suffering acutely because he could not get his accustomed whisky. No alcohol was permitted in the camp ; so he wandered restlessly by day and at night tossed continuously on his creaking folding bed. He drank all the tea and coffee he could obtain and was always hungry. The rations hardly touched his appetite. Some food he begged, some he simply 'won'. The raw rice he cooked in the servants' kitchen attached to the flat. We soon discovered why his sister-in-law, Em Addy, sat all day long upon her bed, saying little but noting everything that happened. We had been out and returned to find that some fried 'biscuits' issued by the kitchen, which we were keeping for our breakfast,

had vanished. "It is that rat," hissed Em, the Snake. "I had to go out and he will have taken them." From that time we realized that it was unsafe to leave the room entirely empty. "As long as there is someone with him," said Em, happy to share her burden, "he cannot do anything underhand. It isn't fair the way he eats Nita's things. This war has made him cruel; but it has made me cruel too. I can be hard on him." We had surplus queue-food, as the children could never manage all their rice, so we gave it to Goldburn; but we took special pains to keep our stores from sight. With children, however, subterfuge is never easy. Guy was so hungry that at times he could not restrain an audible whisper which all the room could hear, "May we have one of those things we mustn't talk about, which we eat in the bathroom?" Then after a whispered query from Mary, he expostulated, "No, not chocolate, dried apricots." Mary, who felt the hunger worse than any of us, had her private store of cold Canadian Christmas pudding, which lasted many a dreary day.

"But it's only irritating your stomach to eat so little," said Goldburn after sampling some sardines from a parcel his wife had received. "Better food makes you more hungry than ever!" And he started poking round the cupboard where Nita kept their stores.

"George," sounded the warning voice from Em the watcher. "Nita is keeping those things for breakfast tomorrow. It wouldn't be fair to eat them."

"I must eat something," said Goldburn desperately, looking for some jam or sugar. He couldn't find them for Nita had hidden them in our pile of bedding.

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"She's hidden it," he muttered at last. "If food comes in you should put it in your belly, then at least you know where it is."

"That is why I eat mine quickly and make Nita eat her share," said Em emphatically, shaking her finger at the door which George had slammed as he went out. "If we didn't, the rat would have it all. He doesn't care if others starve."

As a matter of fact we were not likely to starve entirely, but we had overeaten so much in normal life that we felt the lack of bulk. We should have been having 2400 calories a day, but in that first March we got just half that from the Japanese, though nearly everyone had a little of his own as well. One average day the kitchen received for each of us $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of uncooked rice, nearly 2 oz. of meat, 2 oz. of cabbage, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of sugar and in addition a fifth of one tinned sausage to make up for the previous day's pittance of fish that had been condemned.

There was something likeable about Uncle Goldy, as the children began to call him. He made folded paper toys for Guy, and taught Vee and Joy an endless store of card tricks. He had, however, little time for pastimes which diverted him from his pursuit of food and fuel. One of the problems of bringing home raw rice begged from a kitchen friend or won from a leaky sack was that it had to be cooked. It was George who helped to break up a wooden hut which was just within the wires; it was George who went out in the early morning and late at night just at the curfew hour and brought back young trees and branches. Nita was urgently in need of a board on which to make her pastry with the flour they had obtained; one day a

breathless George brought home an ideal piece of wood which he quickly popped under his blanket. "I got it from the sentry box," he boasted several days later. "The Indian guard stood up to salute some Nips in a passing car. While he was busy fussing his rifle about, I took the seat from behind him. It took the sentry eight seconds to perform but it only took me three."

"It was your audacity that saved you," said Captain Johns a little enviously. "You are nimble and audacious."

"Unless you are audacious, don't do it," advised Goldburn. "If you hesitate and fear you can never get away with things."

He was not always so fortunate. One night he returned with a black eye and bleeding head. An Indian guard had caught him removing some poles and had belaboured him with the butt-end of his rifle.

Captain Johns was grey and worn, a timid man who had skippered a ship for an obscure Chinese firm. Though urged by his wife to get out like George and 'win' some food and fuel, his heart was not in it and he was not successful. He would stand by the hour, his arms folded, gazing over the veranda out to sea. "I stand here on my bridge day after day," he once said when his wife was out. "The ship never moves. Something is wrong. Something is wrong."

Our room was typical of hundreds in the camp. People, usually ill-assorted, settling down together, even the most intimate details of their lives exposed, with no privacy except after darkness fell or within the bathroom or toilet; though with thirty-five people in

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our flat, many of them suffering from digestive upsets and enteritis from the unaccustomed and dirty food, it was hard enough to obtain even this privacy. As we were getting into bed one night Johns, the oddness of the whole situation suddenly striking him, turned to Mary, "You never thought you would be sleeping in my bedroom." Indeed the whole situation was beyond our wildest imagination: the miracle was that we were getting into a routine and even finding the life bearable. Certainly it was always interesting.

Mrs Johns remained our chief problem. She unmercifully hounded the children, snapping if they touched her bed. "Why is she so unhappy?" Vee asked one day, "and why does she want to make us unhappy too? We won't hurt her things." Elsie seemed never satisfied unless scolding or complaining. She argued violently but always ended on a personal note. When Nita accidentally upset water on her pillow, Elsie would take no apology, but screamed, "I know all about your husband and yourself so you had better hold your tongue." When we were alone she boasted how well-connected she was, so much better than those Goldburns, for Nita was nothing better than a barmaid. A less patient man than her husband would have left her long ago. She drove him to the queue again and again because she fancied her portion was smaller than someone else's or because her speck of meat was bone and gristle. "Take back the stew," she commanded him. "It is putrid and I will not have them put their bad stuff on to me!" Without a protest he went. "They will not change it." He was crestfallen when he returned. "But you eat mine. I'll have yours. I don't mind."

At very rare intervals there were duck eggs served from the queue. On one of these outstanding days Captain Johns, with downcast looks, rubbing his hands with a kind of doleful satisfaction, whispered to me, "I've had a very poor tiffin."

"I thought the egg made it pretty good for a change," I said, trying to cheer him.

"But for me it was poor," he continued, with obvious pleasure. "I gave Mrs Johns half my egg and all my soup. She is not well and I want her to get strong."

Despite the selfish greed with which she ate her husband's food as well as her own, Elsie Johns did eventually make herself really ill with worry over the future, and brooding over their loss. She made a large antiphlogistine plaster and then kept it on unchanged for several weeks. As it dried and crumbled, pieces dropped from her as she walked about, and got trodden in our bedding. Soon we found that like the others in the room, we were conspiring to drive her into hospital, so that we might have a little freedom from her constant complaints and crossness.

At last she consented to see the doctor, who promptly ordered her to bed. Despite last-minute protestations, we wheeled her on a stretcher down to the block where Indian prison officers had lived, but which was now the Tweed Bay Hospital. We imagined that now we should have more room with Elsie's camp-bed folded up: but we were mistaken. Her bed had to be left just as it was for if her place were not kept, Elsie was sure that she would die. The compromise that the Captain should sleep in her bed and fold up his own was emphatically rejected, so we remained as cramped

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for space as ever, but thankful for a more peaceful atmosphere. The clock which she had kept facing the wall, because it was her clock, we were, however, able to turn round, so that all could know the time.

The Captain continued to take part of his meagre food to Elsie, but at times he brought titbits back with him, and stories of better food in the hospital than from the queue. George Goldburn then decided that hospital was the place for him.

“No doctor will ever send you,” said Nita.

“But I’m really depressed. I have a cough and this malnutrition is getting me down,” he hopefully suggested. “I’ll be off to Dr James.”

“Dr James is not the sort to oblige a person.” Nita was doubtful, meaning that he would not do something dishonest even for a friend. “However, I will give him one of those new shirts which we had sent in. I know he wants one and that at least will make him friendly.”

The day when George went to the Tweed Bay Hospital it was wet and stormy. Nita brought up the empty wheeled stretcher. I pushed him down on it. We didn’t hesitate to fold up his bed. “There is no fear that the dirty rat will die,” commented the Snake as Mary helped Nita to move it to one side. He returned within a week with a hospital flour ration for Nita to use in baking. He had enjoyed corned beef and extra food, but was anxious to be about again scrounging more bulk.

Elsie too returned, and the Captain continued as her slave ; she lay on her bed all day while he collected and recooked her food. He made a set of saucepans out of tin cans and wire. He offered one of these to

Mary. "Would you like it for a little present?" When she had accepted he added: "And now I have none left," and heaved a sigh of real self-satisfaction. The strain, however, was beginning to tell on him. He looked greyer and thinner every day. We tried to tempt him by sharing some of the things that Mary made in the Chinese kitchen, but he would only pretend to eat and then give the rest to Elsie. One day he was really ill. The weather was cold and rainy: he had only cardboard soles in his shoes, and he had nothing to change into when his feet were wet. He was almost unconscious when we wheeled him to hospital, his temperature was high and he was gasping for breath. "Don't bother, it's only old Johns," said Elsie as we carried him out. "We shall soon be able to draw his flour ration. Get me some tea, Nita." It was only old Johns. He lay in the hospital some weeks, and when he left, it was to be carried in the communal coffin to the cemetery on the wooded ridge which overlooked the sea he loved.

The children seemed to develop a spirit of discernment. The bad they ignored, but the good in the people in the room drew a quick and friendly response from them. We were anxious lest they should be unduly influenced by their surroundings, but they seemed to accept things as they were without emotional upset. "Why does Mrs Goldburn say damn so often?" We heard Joy asking Vee one day. "If she goes on she will build a big dam with the little dams, and the water will carry her away," Vee replied, rather enigmatically, but obviously trying to point a moral. "Well, I think," concluded Joy, a philosopher of six, "she has already been carried a long way." They avoided Elsie when

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she was upset, but at other times were as friendly with her as with the others. One day we found her playing Snakes and Ladders with all three.

For a few hours each day the children went to school, but for much of the rest of the time they were in the room at play that reflected the general conditions of our life. There were endless games of cooking and eating. Every story we read to them, whether *Peter Rabbit*, Kipling or Hans Andersen seemed to have some description of food or feasting, which was discussed and dramatized by the hungry actors. As a practical help they started growing tomatoes in old tin cans ; and also flowers, for the beautiful still had attraction, especially for Vee. The other type of play was 'hospitals'. "A fly sits on your rice and then you get that toilet sickness," announced Dr Guy. But when Guy himself was the patient it was Vee who painfully penned his chart—Name : Guy. Sicknes : Disenterie. Room : 10 people. Bed : matres on floor. People in family : five. Tempricher : 103 point six. Food : Rice water, soop, tea.

A new ration card I received was made from a piece of cardboard box, which had contained breakfast cereal. On the back it had two words, Quaker : Puffed. Was it a sign, I wondered, that I was swelling out with beri-beri, or did it mean that we were not fully identifying ourselves with the people in our room, who were like so many in the camp ? Life was so small and petty, filled with unworthy squabbles, almost entirely self-centred. Something must be done to encourage morale and a wider point of view, to turn our thoughts away from ourselves to something bigger.

"Why did God save you and save me during the

fighting in Hong Kong? What is the purpose of our lives?" asked Paul Green, the preacher, earnestly one Sunday morning. "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." Had He come in vain as far as we were concerned? Our lives were narrow in every way. For those of us who believed that there could be no release for at least two years, or who felt with Jack Sneed that we must act as though we were in camp indefinitely, it was especially important that our lives should be deepened and made more abundant.

"But you are pro-Japanese, if you think we shall be here two years," said Miss Addy in real horror. "We shall not be long now."

"Yes, we shall be out by Easter." Elsie, for once, was on her side. "There is really authentic news. The Chinese Army is attacking Canton. The American submarines are just off Hong Kong. You are a traitor if you think we shall be here two years; that undermines us and makes the Japanese win."

"How do you know about the submarines?" I asked, trying in vain to bring a little reason into the discussion.

"It's certain. They came up at night and they gave the Chinese fishermen American dollar bills; so that proves it!"

"It won't be long now," happily repeated the Snake, nodding her grey head, "and then some of those Japanese will be sorry."

The planchette, tea leaves, the cards, and every superstitious device, called in by the anxious to give them news at a time when none came to us, supported Elsie and the Snake. They naturally would. In a few weeks Easter would be with us and then we should be

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free. Elsie dived into her pillow where she hid the jewels she had rescued from her home, and taking out a gold cross hung on a slender chain, held it above a circle of letters and watched the swings, "Soon we shall be free. Now it will not be long."



CHAPTER IV

STANLEY CAMP

Stanley Camp—the buildings
and the internees—a search
and its consequences—
Easter 1942



Nita Goldburn had been telling us about the early days of the camp. We were standing in a very long queue reaching from outside the married quarters down to the canteen, which was in a room attached to the old prison officers' club. "You were lucky you missed them," she said. "When we got to Stanley we were all of us half dead. My head was splitting ; the children were crying for water, but there was nothing to eat and nothing to drink."

"I thought some people had come on ahead to get things ready ? " said Mary.

"They mostly looked after themselves." Nita gave a snort of disgust. "There was nothing to cook with ; there were even some of the dead soldiers left lying unburied. We had all to fend for ourselves. The people were like waves, surging here and there trying to find places."

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“ But was there no proper billeting ? ” we asked her.

“ Not really,” she told us. “ The married people mostly came to our blocks as the rooms were a bit better. The single and unattached men went up to St Stephen’s ; then when the Peak people came they were put in the quarters where the Indian prison warders had lived. The Americans and Dutch had their own blocks, of course.”

We were standing out on the road behind the married quarters, the cream-coloured modern flats where the British prison officers had lived. On the hill in front of us were two prison bungalows which the Japanese had taken as their headquarters, while a little to the south among trees were the much desired red-roofed bungalows attached to the college. The class-rooms and school dormitories had made large comfortless barracks, but the great hall of the college had been left empty for church services, entertainments and school. The Indian quarters were partly hidden from where we stood, but we could see the white cement parapet round the flat roof of one of these seven red brick buildings which were built round the large playing-field we called the village green. The Indian blocks were made up of flats, each with two small cement-floored rooms in which six or eight persons lived.

“ Shall we never move on ? I’m getting cold.” It was a sunless day and a bitter wind was blowing from the north-east. Nita was shivering, and folded her sack-like skirt more tightly about her waist. She was feeling that weariness which a sudden loss of weight produces and seemed shrunken and older. Some people had been out in the queue from the raising of the curfew soon after daybreak. The canteen

was an effort on the part of the community as a whole to get extra food into the camp. The profits of the Japanese, through whom the arrangements were made, could only be imagined ; but the canteen was a boon to us all. From time to time, if we had money, we could buy small portions of sugar, tinned goods, and jam or beans. The kitchen food was more palatable when recooked with some of these extras on small Chinese stoves or chatties, our fuel, twigs from the hillside.

It was well into the afternoon when at last we reached the canteen. Mary and I took turns in waiting, while Em Addy replaced Nita when she ate her midday rations. We were among the last to be supplied, many behind us being turned away. They were not only cold and disappointed but angry, for as usual there had been some who had purchased more than a fair share. It was not until later that a system of numbered tabs was introduced that ensured a strict rotation and fairness of opportunity for everyone in the camp.

The cold had been too much for Nita ; that evening she writhed in agony with cramp. As she lay groaning, slouched in a chair, Miss Robinson came in to borrow a pair of cutting-out scissors she greatly coveted which Mary had found and brought from Mount Cameron. "I am so sorry you are ill," she said to Nita. "I am afraid there is nothing anybody can do to help you. We are all in the same boat and can only help ourselves." As Vee shut the door after her we looked at each other and laughed. Already we had sent for the doctor, and Goldburn had heated a brick in the kitchen ashes. This, wrapped in a woolly coat of Mary's, was reposing on Nita's stomach, covered with a pillow,

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when the doctor arrived. Despite the pain, Nita was game, and in response to his enquiry managed to gasp, "Any minute now twins are expected."

We were glad that it was Wesley Frost who had come. He was a missionary doctor before entering Government service and remained a pillar of strength to many in Hong Kong. We kept as quiet as we could while he attended his patient, and when she was more comfortably lying on her camp-bed, we sat round on the chairs and our mattresses to drink tea, the only fee we could offer to express our thanks. Frost had a kindly look on his face. "Yes, please," he nodded as we gave him pine-needle extract to flavour his drink. "I am glad to see you are taking your Vitamin C. Who gathers the needles?"

"I do," said Vee, "on the slopes around St Stephen's on the way home from school."

"Go on drinking the pine-needle tea and you will keep well," encouraged Dr Frost. "Health and morale go together and we all need them both. We have to keep up our courage and not get disheartened by this." He waved a copy of the *Hong Kong News* which he took from his pocket.

The Japanese had commenced publishing this small daily paper in English for neutrals living in Hong Kong and specially for the Indian community whom they sought to alienate from the British and enlist on their side. Some copies were sent to the camp. We read of the loss of first one place and then another. The American Navy in the Far East, we were told, was being eliminated, and the British crippled. The fall of Singapore was a blow from which the camp took long to recover. Even allowing for Japanese pro-

paganda, the more thoughtful realized that our internment was going to be long. Some, who had been keeping themselves cheerful by thought of a speedy release, were becoming mentally and spiritually numbed by a sense of defeat.

"Doctor, when are we going to get out of this?" asked Nita.

"Now that doesn't matter at all," answered Frost, a smile on his face. "What happens to you and to me is of no consequence at all; there are much more important issues on foot. Perhaps you were not at church on Sunday, but if you were you would have heard Padre Green say, as he usually does, 'Give victory to righteousness, we pray Thee, O God.' Victory is more important than anything. How are we to keep cheerful and well?"

"Kill flies," said Guy, who was listening while he played dominoes in a corner with Joy.

"There is something in that," Frost said kindly amid a general laugh. "We must see that food is kept clean and away from flies; we haven't sufficient medicines to deal with a dysentery epidemic if we should get one. So if you and your sisters kill flies you will be helping the sanitary squads to keep us all healthy." He spoke of the two basic slogans of communal living which had been posted up in the camp: Leave the lavatory as you would like to find it; Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. "Let us keep cheerful and well by forgetting ourselves," he advised us. "There are so many who are much worse off than we are."

"But none quite so crowded," broke in Joy.

"Oh, yes," the doctor replied. "And so many families are separated. Young girls or men are with

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married couples ; and young boys with elderly men and women. One married woman is alone in a room full of men."

" I think it should all be altered," expostulated Nita, who was rapidly reviving. She felt strongly because many married couples were separated, while some who were unmarried had secured rooms together. It made people bitter when influence or bribes to the Japanese or their Chinese officials secured special treatment for the few.

" The Japanese seem to object to people being moved," Frost explained, " and they have threatened if we fuss to separate the men and the women entirely." This was something we all felt must be avoided.

As Dr Frost left, Mary and I remembered how on the previous Sunday Paul Green had similarly urged us to forget ourselves and our troubles. It was hard to realize that others had needs which were as vital as our own, and that sacrifice was demanded for the good of us all. Unless we were to be destroyed by suffering, we must so consecrate our lives that we might be refined and given a deeper understanding. " Make us less sensitive about our own sorrows," he had prayed ; and had thrown out the challenge, " May we drink without fear from the cup that has been given to us ; and let us forget our private cares in an adventure for God."

Queenie Cooper, who lived behind a curtain in a kitchen above us, came in to ask Nita Goldburn to help her with some sewing. She was a widow whose husband had been killed in the fighting. She was full of vivacity and had a way of saying ' Look here ! ' " Look here, will you sew me this sun-top ? " We hardly needed the direction, for she was so good to look at, so

young and gay. We did not then know of the failings which we were to discover when later we lived close beside her. "Look here," she told Nita, "I am jolly glad you had Dr Frost." We agreed with Queenie's views. Wesley Frost, like a number of others, had that added quality of life without which the camp would have been a far sadder place.

One morning quite early a sudden order flashed from mouth to mouth: "In a quarter of an hour you must assemble down by the prison. All rooms and boxes must be left open." It was no practical joke, but a command to which no exceptions were permitted. Crestfallen, we went into the grey mist from our blocks. Mary, the Snake and Mrs Johns were the last to leave our room, each being reluctant to abandon her possessions until the others had gone, each wondering what would have happened before she saw her things again.

It was raining quite heavily by the time the whole camp was assembled. It was the first and only time we were gathered together in one place. We were an unhappy sight: three thousand strong, standing in no serried ranks, but huddled in groups, sharing our few raincoats and umbrellas. The only men who made any pretence at formation were the British police. This body of men was one to whom we owed much, for they shouldered more than a lion's share of the physical labour of the camp. Some of them had married Chinese wives, who had come with their husbands and children to the camp. A number of these women were an inspiration in the way they quietly made the most of the little they had, showing the rest of us how best to cook our food, and augment our rations from tiny gardens.

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Some of them also became distributing agents for extra food smuggled in through the wires.

The police helped to make up for the shortage of young men of military age. As we looked round, it was also obvious that there were fewer children, especially adolescents, than is normal in a cross section of people. There were approximately one hundred and ninety British children under ten years of age, but only ninety more between that age and eighteen. A large proportion of these young people were Eurasians with permanent homes in the East. Most women and young families had been evacuated to Australia in 1940, so that the majority of the women who were interned were either nurses or skilled in some profession, or they were merely strong willed, capable of defying Government orders and thinking largely of themselves.

It was pointed out to us as we waited that nearly all the bedraggled men, police as well as others, were leaders, selected for the Far East by Government, or business, Church or mission, because of some outstanding capacity or special knowledge. All were used to having people under them; perhaps this was a factor that at first made co-operation difficult.

We were international too. Only two and a half thousand were British; about three hundred and twenty Americans formed a small community, easily organized and not nearly so mixed as our own. There were fifty Dutch and a sprinkling of Russians, Belgians, French and a Greek. The Norwegians came later. The miracle of Stanley is that from this ill-assorted gathering of individuals, most of them supremely unhappy because of losses they had sustained, all of them seeking to keep themselves alive,

none of them able to care greatly for the needs of others, there sprang a spirit of camaraderie and community. There were always exceptions, but a number learned that their own survival depended on the group, and that only by some form of communal service could life continue, not to mention be enriched.

At length the Japanese officials arrived, and under their direction Indians in their employ and Japanese gendarmes proceeded to search us. Then when they had passed us, we filed up to St Stephen's Hall to wait for the signal that we might return to our blocks. Different parties of gendarmes were examining rooms in the various parts of the camp. At long last we were free. Leaving Mary and the children, I arrived at the room at the same time as Elsie Johns, both of us inspired by the same thought. "Don't touch a thing," she declared. "Leave it all just as we found it. I arrived at the same time as you did, didn't I, so you can tell them it was all just like this."

The room had been one of the first to be examined and had been more thoroughly searched than most. "Yet everything seems here," Nita declared.

"I'm afraid not," said Mary, tidying our things, "an army ground sheet and two army water bottles are gone." Others too found that military things such as steel helmets had been taken away, but there was little sign of a unified plan. A typewriter or two were also removed; but seemingly no radio sets or arms had been discovered, even if they existed.

"Did I hear that you lost some water containers?" We looked up to see the padre, Paul Green, standing in the doorway with an army container and a bottle in his hands. "I have these; I want you to take them."

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It was such a change from the attitude of self above service in which we lived that we felt overwhelmed. We realized why this short, grey-haired man with the kindly blue eyes and the face of an ascetic was not only beloved but was a power in the camp. From the beginning he had been one of the most progressive Church leaders, and also under the chairmanship of a British business man had helped as a member of the British committee to bring order into the camp.

"He's a good man," said the Snake, "one of the very few whom I would trust to look after our food." That was saying a good deal at a time when it was often remarked "No man can trust even himself", and on some store-room doors three different locks had been placed, the keys being kept by three of the more honest men.

Next afternoon I came into the room to find Elsie Johns alone. She was kneeling by the fire-place, her arms and face covered with soot. "It's gone," she whispered with suppressed excitement. "It's gone. The rat Goldburn has stolen it. I've waited all day to look ; I was afraid all the time."

"What do you mean ? I don't understand." I spoke quietly, trying to soothe her.

"A packet of jewels ; all I have. I put them up here before we left for the search. Now they have gone." And she frantically thrust her arm up the chimney once more.

"Let me try," I said, kneeling beside her and rolling up my sleeves. I felt along the black ledges and there safely stowed was a package wrapped up in newspaper. Elsie, I thought, was going to have hysterics in her wild relief. Black as we were, she threw her arms round my

neck, and kneeling together she kissed me most warmly. "I shall never forget what you have done," she protested. "I will always be your friend and help you when I can." Then she remembered the mess we were in. "Quick, come and wash before the others come back. You must use my hot thermos water, and my soap, not your own!"

Perhaps it was a memory of her extravagant promises that made her give the children some brown sugar slabs from a parcel which she received from friends in the city. Nita had been up to headquarters to get it, for Elsie, as usual, demanded help from her friends. As she undid the wrappings the address on the label struck us as ominous: Mrs Captain Johns, the *Interment* Camp, Stanley.

These parcels from town meant a great deal to those who received them; and, except when the Japanese as punishment or for reasons known only to themselves forbade them, they arrived every week. Eventually, standardized sacks were used, but each package had to weigh under five pounds. Although about a thousand came in every month, they were mostly for the same people, particularly the representatives of big Hong Kong firms who despite the war had good credit in town. Many will never forget their Chinese friends who with great courage remembered them from time to time, for the secret police were feared in town and even the suspicion of open friendliness with internees or prisoners of war might be enough to condemn a man to prison, torture or death. Less than ten per cent of the camp received parcels in any regular manner, so that they did not make any effective contribution to our food as a whole. Some, who were without roots in Hong Kong,

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didn't get any at all. We happily received several as a friend with whom we had left a camera sold it and bought tinned fruit and jam.

"These things from the city are a marvellous help," said Mary, thanking Mrs Johns for her gifts to the children.

"Yes, you must have friends if you want to manage ; these organizations cannot do much," Elsie replied.

It was true that official contacts with the International Red Cross delegate, through lack of Japanese co-operation and other causes, were slow to be established and were never as satisfactory as was hoped. An informal relief committee, however, collected or bought what necessities or food they could and sent them into the camp for distribution by our own welfare committee, which established a medical panel to decide who, among the sufferers from malnutrition, most needed the extra food.

"The Salvation Army has been doing pretty well," I suggested.

"The *Starvation* Army, that's what it is," said Elsie, now getting roused. "Never again will I give to any so-called Christian organization." It turned out that she had received a cup and a spoon, but was envious of Nita who had been given a tin of bully beef to help her feed her particularly restless, hungry husband.

It was a new and rather bitter experience for some of us, who had in the past been the rather thoughtless donors of charity, to have to be receivers instead. It is difficult not to feel hurt when needs are judged on inadequate information, and to rejoice over something a neighbour has received while we ourselves have had to do without. Discontent was inevitable when supplies

were so insufficient. We had wanted beds for Joy and Guy as it was so draughty sleeping on the wooden floor, but there were none for us ; in any case those in the Indian quarters had first claim, for they were sleeping on concrete floors which were often damp with humid heat, and in rainy weather were quite wet. By the end of the year there were still seven hundred people without even makeshift beds.

" I really have a claim on the Army too," Elsie continued her grouse. " Every year I have given them a subscription. Let them see what happens when they come collecting when the war is over. They'll have a surprise."

" Yes, you'll give them a double subscription," laughed Mary. Really they were magnificent, these people in charge of distribution, seeking to do their best in an impossible situation, keeping calmly judicious despite the clamour. Mary herself, like most of the women in the camp, valued specially a gift of material. When the Welfare had put into their hands a piece of cloth or silk, together with needles, thread and press-studs, it had done something decisive to restore the self-respect of more than half the camp. In the creation of shorts and sun-tops for the warmer weather, which was already heralded, many women found a new interest in life.

At last it seemed as though the British community was becoming established. For our little family, and possibly for many others, the first Easter marked the turning point. Some of us had been to hospital, but the colder weather was passing and we were getting more accustomed to our diet. The Easter sun was shining gloriously and there was a new hope in the camp. For

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all the children a party was arranged. They played in the sunshine or sat about and ate the doughnuts the cooks had heroically prepared. As they each received an egg and cake which had been secured with greatest difficulty, and as they laughed and sang in circles on the grass, it was obvious that they at least had accepted Stanley and were prepared to live happy and contented lives.

The Church, with that united and international voice which in itself had been one of the first significant expressions of co-operation, gave out the Easter message of resurrection and new life. Despite our losses, despite our sorry lot, we were not deserted, not forsaken, not betrayed. Our lives in their entirety were safe in hands that could be absolutely trusted. Stanley and all it meant was overruled by God. We had been deceived in days past by our wealth and our position; our mansions in Hong Kong had offered no real security. Now we were stripped naked and we saw ourselves as we truly were, not as we imagined ourselves to be. A new peace, a new content, a new hope in life, were dawning as our sense of values changed and we reached after that which was eternal. We were beginning to learn to trust the very heart of things, and to identify the needs and welfare of others with our own.

The united services were held in the hall of St Stephen's College, which was crowded that Eastertime. The lilies, red and white, were in bloom. The sky, seen through the windows, was very blue. The distant hills were becoming a lighter green with new growth. Men and women of different churches or of none were bound in a common act of worship. Some knelt on the bare, brown boards or on straw mats, some sat upon stools or

cushions they had brought, the rest stood along the sides and at the back of the hall. Together, with simple earnestness, those imprisoned for an unknown time, prayed in fellowship to God "in Whose eternal Life the days and years are but as moments". They echoed in their hearts the words which led their prayers :

From Thy love neither space, nor time, neither life nor death, can ever separate us. In Thee we are one . . . with those we love, for the love which Thy Spirit hath set in our hearts, wherewith we love those for whom we pray, mocks at barriers of wire, and ocean and continent. . . .

. . . for those divided from us by the earthly barriers of sinful men, do we pray Thy blessing. . . .

We pray that we may together so pass through the changes and chances of this fleeting world, that we forget not that our true lives and our affections are grounded and rooted in Eternity ; and that our abiding House is with Thee in Heaven.

Here in this world are many gleams and flashes of Eternity : Thou hast given us much love, much beauty, much happiness, many gifts for which we humbly thank Thee. Thou hast given us work to do, lessons to be learnt. Thou hast yet in store for us happiness beyond our desires, both in this world and in the next. May we possess our souls in patience for Thou, O Shepherd of our souls, wilt not forsake us or leave us desolate.

Thou, O Eternal Father . . . Thou wilt not leave Thy children desolate.

Amen (*and then again*) Amen.

CHAPTER V

A ROOM OF OUR OWN



American repatriation, June 1942—a room of our own—our neighbours — redeeming the time—Red Cross parcels, November 1942—the hey-day of internment—the Canadians leave, September 1943

An event of outstanding importance for us all was the repatriation of the Americans. For a month or two there had been talk of it. Then, at the end of

June, during that first year of internment, 1942, the *Asama Maru* came into sight. We had seen ships in convoy, laden with Hong Kong loot, and others carrying men and munitions from Japan, but we had never since our internment seen a ship as large as this. Her chief wonder in our eyes, however, was that some of our fellows, after nearly half a year behind barbed wire, were going in her to the freedom of the outside world once again. In their departure there was promise that our own repatriation would follow.

"We'll tell the world," said Jack Sneed, as he prepared to go. "When they know the truth they won't leave you here. Three months will see you through." His children, laden with little bags and sacks, some of which we recognized from Mount Cameron days, ran ahead, so eager were they to be gone. "It hasn't been so bad," Mrs Sneed was saying, her own anxiety about an indefinite future ended, "but we have missed letters from our friends. That has been the hardest thing to bear: to be so entirely cut off. We will write for you," she reassured us. For days the Sneeds had been memorizing the names and addresses of many people, our friends among them. They were to send them our news. "We'll be seeing you," they called, as they passed along the road to release. Yes, we'll be seeing you, but not in three months. Jack's earlier advice was sounder.

We sat on the wall of the cemetery and with deep emotion watched them go. We tried to pick out our friends among the three hundred who were leaving. They hurried along the jetty and into the tender which was to take them to their ship. We had dreams of good food for them, of fruit and ice-cream for the children. There was Miss Robinson struggling with her bags. The night before she left she had borrowed our most treasured clinical thermometer: suddenly we remembered she had not returned it. Internment, like war, certainly may bring out the worst.

We were unsettled when the Americans had gone, for we too longed to be free. There were rumours of ships coming to take us away. We doubted, yet some of us did half believe. We were demoralized by a topical song with an infectious tune. Forgetful for the moment

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of any responsibility to the Chinese whose homes were in Hong Kong and who had nowhere to go, we, like the Americans, wanted to 'sail away', with

*. . . happy hearts and free
When we're putting out to sea,
Afloat in a boat, on the way to Lourenço Marques.*

For ourselves this repatriation meant a great deal. Except for a few Americans who had elected to remain behind, their blocks were empty. Quite unexpectedly, the billeting officer put his head round the door and whispered so that the others should not hear: "You're having a room to yourselves. Be ready to move tomorrow." The children danced with excitement. It seemed too good to be true.

We gathered together our things, and at the zero hour we were on the doorstep of our new home. We found three folding beds, two chairs and a bookcase. We commandeered the flat's kitchen table and cut down its legs to make it a convenient height. We even possessed a wardrobe with a mirror and a chest of drawers, although from this two long drawers were missing. While the three children guarded the things in our new room, the rest of us, with the help of George Goldburn, carried our possessions from our old block. Though we could not have imagined it possible a few months previously, we found to our surprise that we were parting from our old room-mates with regret. They also seemed to share our feelings, and bemoaned our going, partly fearing who would be put in the room in our place. Even Elsie Johns insisted that we should take with us an empty five-pound jam tin of hers to use for reboiling our rice.

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During a lull in the cleaning and unpacking the children in their new freedom skipped around singing "Home, home, a home of our own!" But Mona Moon, one of the twenty-four people who had come to live in the flat, hearing their voices, gave an emphatic snort. "Home! it is an abuse of a perfectly good word!"

Yet home it was to us, even from the first moment: a tiny room just fourteen feet by twelve, the smaller of the two bedrooms in the flat, where the five of us lived for three years and a quarter. We never forgot that first thrill when we unpacked everything we possessed; and when for the first time since our internment we sat on our chairs and soap and tomato box stools and sang a heartfelt "Thank you, God, for everything." At every meal after that we sang a grace just to make sure that we never forgot; though later on when we were very hungry we sang halfway through the meal or when we had finished eating, as it is not easy for the ravenous to be controlled when food is placed before them. A room of our own in which we could talk or play with freedom, where we could have those little jokes and disciplines which mean so much in every family's life; of course it was home. At night there was the joy of going to bed in privacy, and sleeping apart from other men and women. Despite its exasperating limitations, we loved our home more and more as the months grew into years, partly as a canary must love its cage, but also for the freedom it brought us.

The street cries of the Indian 'village' woke us every morning. They sounded just below us and we heard bells and the clang of iron on an old hanging car-fender, telling out the time and the invitation of those who boiled water: "Come and get it". It was our signal to

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get to the bathroom quickly before the men in the room next door were roused. The women in the big room of the flat washed after them. The three Carona girls, who lived in the kitchen, were rumoured by Guy, in self-justification, never to wash. Actually they went to the flat below where their parents and five other brothers and sisters lived in one room together. The need to economize in soap appealed to the smaller children. One lather to do for both hands and face was the rule, though later we covered the bottom and sides of the tablet with silver paper wrappers from cigarettes issued during the first few months of the camp. In this way the soap was conserved and we were never without.

"And now for the beds." It was the most hated task of the day ; but with five beds filling the space there was no room to move. Joy and Guy at first had continued to sleep on the floor, but at the end of the year we got two flimsy beds from the Welfare. With the mosquito nets down, the room was a maze. Since we had wakened with the Goldburns to the drone of mosquitoes, slow moving and heavy, burdened with the blood of their victims, we had been thankful we had brought army nets from the Canadian dump. They were hung on a wire and could be run over the beds at night, but drawn back to a corner and hidden by day.

By folding our army blankets and the rags we called sheets, and clearing the beds, we accomplished two things. We made a room fit to live in by day, and we kept down the bed bugs. These ill-smelling pests dislike being disturbed, and they did not infest us, though we sometimes found several, usually at the top of the bed nets where they sheltered by day, descending at night on their raids. Mary, who had not lived in China in

vain, had insisted on bringing a large tin of Flit which we found in a house on the Peak. We used it with care, but constant vigilance was required ; and we exhorted each other to keep up the effort, understanding why so many who live in the slums give up. There is so much for the poor to contend with, so little equipment to use, and so little energy left for the battle.

We were never so unfortunate as the Shelleys. In the reshuffle after the Americans had gone, Kate had secured a room for herself and her two big children down in the Indian quarters. They had bought an old wooden cupboard from an Indian warder. Although Kate had scrubbed it as well as she could, she soon found plenty of bed bugs. Once when I visited them, Kate was at the hospital where she spent most of her time and energy, but Maureen and Jack were debugging an old iron bed they possessed. They were not using the methods favoured by most of Hong Kong's élite : scraping with a knife, scorching with a candle carefully kept for the purpose, or painting with kerosene or disinfectant if they were fortunate to own some. Maureen held the bed upright and noisily hammered the iron with an axe. " It stuns the bugs, deafens them ; they don't know where they are so they just drop off," she said breathlessly by way of explanation. Indeed they fell in a shower to the floor.

It was well worth the labour of putting our bedding away in the wardrobe cupboard. We got what so few people possessed : an integrated home, where we could welcome our friends from their more barrack-like quarters. Two of the beds we pushed to the wall. One was the ' day bed ' used for anyone who needed a rest, and a dump for the mending, of which there was always

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an abnormal amount. Though our clothes were so scanty, the materials were old and so, like the poor, Mary was endlessly striving to make do with things that were long outworn. The other bed was for Joy. She was acquisitive, with countless possessions and nowhere to keep them save on her bed and the window-sill near it. Under her bed were the family toys.

"Now may we go?" the children would ask when the room had been entirely transformed, before it was time for the breakfast of rice and bran gruel to be served from the kitchen. With a scamper they rushed to the babies, who later when they started to crawl would cluster round the door like young kittens. Ronald Dale and Nancy Thornbridge, both born during the fighting, were under the special protection of Guy and Joy. Vee, as the eldest, had the newest baby of all, David George Barrie.

One of the joys of our life was when our friend Gladys Barrie secured one of the two servants' rooms attached to our flat. Five months after internment her baby was born. He was a blue-eyed, fat boy whom everyone loved, but especially Vee, who was permitted to help at his baths in the sink. Until David was born, Gladys had lived in the hospital. She had been tired and unwell: the strain of nursing during the war had been great. She had also been desperately anxious for George. After that telephone message on the day the war started she had heard nothing, except a rather ambiguous message, through a soldier she nursed, that she was not to worry. Whether he was alive or dead she had no idea, though by underground channels there came a rumour that he was a prisoner at Shamshuipo. The weeks lengthened to months and still there was no

letter. It was one of the cruellest hardships inflicted by the Japanese on so many of the women of the camp, that although separated from the men—their husbands, their lovers or sons—only by the width of the island and the narrow channel to Kowloon, letters were not permitted. “It is now over seven months since I saw George,” said Gladys one day. “I have no photograph even and I am almost forgetting what he looks like.” She was gazing northwards from our room over the Indian quarters to the hills of Hong Kong, behind which was Kowloon. “I am convinced he is alive. Oh, if only I could hear.”

Outside the servants' quarters at the back was a little veranda. When the day was over and the children all in bed, Mary and I would often sit there with Gladys, sipping tea flavoured by putting a few mint leaves in the pot. Except at the coldest part of the year it was very lovely there. At certain seasons we could see just above the horizon the Southern Cross, circling over the Stanley forts. Sparkling round the islands were the lights of the fishing boats—each of which sent a strong beam on to the water to attract the fish. We frequently counted them, thirty or forty near in, and then fifty or more farther out: “The fishermen must be good see-ers to catch fish at night,” as Guy said once as he watched them. But we tried not to think of the fish, for though some of the ships brought their catch to Stanley village, the Japanese would never let it come to us. The beauty was almost overpowering when the moon was full. It rose behind the rock, shaped like a cat, crouched on the top of the hill which separated us from the hospital and the prison leprosarium where most of our doctors lived. The high prison walls

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despite their camouflage were bleak and white. Down below us in Tweed Bay, Johanne's island lay like a gem in peaceful water.

"Why do you call it Johanne's island?" asked Gladys. "That isn't its real name."

"Oh no," Mary told her. "It was Vee who named it after a friend who is part of our family, though she is now in China. One day the children were out at the back looking into the prison. They were trying to pick out the Europeans. But the sight of the men plucking blades of grass with their fingers, the Indian warder standing behind and the Japanese officers strutting among them, was too much, and I turned their attention to the islands from which the fishing junks were returning, sails spread.

" 'That's my island,' said Guy, pointing to the small one that rears like a castle from the blue.

" 'And the next one's mine,' went on Joy, indicating the larger one nearer the east. 'Vee can have the big one here in the Bay.'

"Vee looked at the island. It was a glorious morning. The light shone through the tall grasses that covered the top. On the slope near the mainland there was that rock like a humped teddy bear forever climbing, but rather like us, never reaching the top. Then she said 'Let's give it to Johanne: it will make us feel that she is living with us again instead of being so far away. It will always remind us of her.'

"From that time the name has remained and we think of it as belonging to Johanne and all the friends whom we love. Just there, outside the wire, in freedom, it is a symbol of those who think of us, pray for us, and probably worry about us. When things get too much

here in the flat and I feel we just cannot go on any longer, I come to peep at the island. It is always there, just the same. The sea may be blue or the waves angry and grey, wet weather or fine, it is always unchanging. It is a sign of the steadfastness of friendship and love that mocks at separation and distance ; a help in all things, at all times. I look at the island and then go back to the worst tangles refreshed."

We sat for a moment, our thoughts naturally turning to those from whom we were parted. "During the day with David it isn't so bad," said Gladys, breaking the silence. "I chatter to him about his daddy. But at night it is sometimes more than I can stand ; only sheer weariness drives me to sleep. When shall we hear ? You know," she said with pathetic despair, "I feel all the time as though I were dying inside my heart."

Not until Boxing Day, more than a year since she had seen him, did Gladys get a card, already three months old, with fifteen brief words of greeting. George was alive and well, a prisoner of war.

There were three main rooms in the flat ; we lived in the central and smallest of these. Four women and three children occupied the largest room, while five men were in the bedroom on the other side of us. There was an oppressive sense of always being crowded which made it a harassing matter for the two mothers, Elma Dale and Mabel Thornbridge, to look after their babies. Elma was tall and blonde with a face that was becoming hard and calculating though it was still softened at times by a sweet youthful smile. Mabel, in contrast, was short and dark, but with worry often masking her usually cheerful appearance. They were struggling alone in difficult circumstances, their husbands being

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prisoners of war. They felt a constant restraint from sharing their room with two unattached women, one of them Queenie Cooper, who had moved from the kitchen above our old room with the Goldburns. The other, Mrs Mona Moon, middle-aged and set in her ways, still in the grey uniform of the Auxiliary Nursing Service, had dark chestnut hair when she first came to Stanley. Under this, as time went on, there startlingly developed an undyed silver halo. Her disposition won her the name of the Moaner from Vee and Joy.

The close intimacy was something that affected us all : we could never escape from each other. In our tiny room one wet afternoon eight-year-old Ethel Dale, who was fair like her mother, and Guy were playing with a toy train which had been found in the camp. Backwards and forwards the engine ran over the line, from below the window under the table and round to the door. Joy was sitting on her bed with Joan Carona, from the kitchen, sewing dolls' clothes from bits they had found in a dust-bin. They were using as thread some fine strands unpicked from lamp wick the Welfare had given them. Vee was up on the day bed reading a story. Mary, having borrowed Gladys' electric iron, was pressing the clothes and then hanging them up on the mosquito net wires. They were what Guy called 'dark white', but with only cold water and practically no soap, washing was not what it should be. Between the wardrobe and the fire-place was our 'kitchen'; a tin still half full of hard-tack, which the Japanese Major had given us, on which our electric hot-plate was set. By this I was sitting on a soap box, stirring some rice gruel and trying to read. The whole thing was fantastic and yet it was normal, except that in

good weather, unless it was too hot, the children could play on the roads and the hillsides and I could seek the shade of a chimney-stack on the flat roof for quiet study.

From the point of view of the children we had some of the social advantages of the large Chinese family. The three little babies were really a godsend. We lacked, however, the wise direction of a despotic grandmother. In our democracy where all were equal, it was frequently difficult to get things accomplished. When people were hungry their sense of humour was lessened. Offence was easily given and irritation was quickly aroused by the shortcomings of others. As one of the men said about his four room-mates : " If they think I am ordering, or am superior in any way, the whole lot of them will become unco-operative." We had to discover a middle path between an unpleasant critical attitude to unsocial neighbours and being trodden underfoot.

In the ordinary life of the world people either rarely see their neighbours or meet them out of doors in the street, neatly tidied and dressed, their minds never off guard. We knew each other so well that nothing was hidden. Everyone knew how we behaved in the bathroom and at the sink. Normally it is a problem how to foster fellowship among comparative strangers : with us it was how to live happily with people we knew only too well.

The strain on the mothers was great ; it was a miracle not that they sometimes were hasty and crude but that they managed so well, helping each other and fighting for their children's welfare. The toddlers, like the aged and the sick, were helped by special diets

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while we still had electricity. It was all the same food as the rest of us got, with occasional small additions from the Welfare, but more tastefully prepared than in the communal kitchens. The babies got fifteen ounces of evaporated or powdered milk each day, abnormally diluted. Milk had to be carefully rationed, and was permitted only for the most urgent adult cases. Most mothers fed their own babies as long as they could; Mabel Thornbridge surprised both herself and her doctors by continuing to feed Nancy for a year and a half.

Feeling was widespread not only against the women who had elected to remain in Hong Kong, but also against the children though they obviously had not had any choice. The British Community Council decided that some relief money from the Pope should be equally divided amongst all over eighteen. "But this is unheard of," said a Roman Catholic parent. "I am sure our Pope would never desire to leave out the children of our large families."

"But there is nothing you can buy for children," said a gruff masculine voice as we discussed it. "What about sugar?" "And bean flour?" "Oranges?" "Milk powder?" "Eggs?" "Margarine?" Mothers named things that could occasionally be bought in small quantities at the canteen. "Don't you think children can eat?"

The Council's decision was changed 'according to the wish of the donor' so that all irrespective of age got their share of \$5, but there were many grumbles from those who had lost a few cents by including the children.

Over and over again this problem arose, though

many of the children were Eurasians who had been discouraged from going to Australia ; others had fathers who had been killed fighting in the defence of Hong Kong, or who were prisoners of war, some of whom died at the hands of their captors. The Japanese gave equal rations for all, irrespective of age or sex, though the small monthly ration of cigarettes, which was usually available for purchase, was only for those over eighteen. The community itself, however, had a few things to issue, but always there were some middle-aged childless folk who felt that the children were getting too much. " Cannot they see," said the tall Elma Dale with disgust, " that my Ethel and Ronnie have got to eat ? They and the under-eighteens who are growing need more food than some of these grown-ups. When there isn't enough, why cannot we all share alike instead of penalizing the children ? "

" The children get milk and extras," said a man who was passing and overheard her remark.

" Only those under three receive a real ration of milk. Those from three years to five get a little, but often less than some grown-ups on the clinic. After five years they get no milk at all." Elma Dale knew her facts. " So if you want to be fair, give everyone in the camp who is over five the same amount, and let those under three have no extras."

Gladys Barrie who was very fair-minded and not easily upset returned in tears from the clinic where she had been collecting David George's milk. An elderly woman in front of her had suddenly asked : " You wouldn't have the children looked after and fed at the expense of the aged and infirm would you ? "

" They have their lives before them," answered

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Gladys. "It is better for the world that they should be strong and healthy than that those of us who are older should keep fit. After all we have lived our lives."

The woman, who was evidently feeling weak, had exploded: "Well, I think it would be much better for your baby to be in the cemetery instead of some of the older people who were leading good and useful lives and now through no fault of their own have weakened, died and been buried there."

Kate Shelley came forth as a champion of the children. Until the Japanese refused to have women in such a position, she was a block representative of the Indian quarter. She took the matter to our Council and presented our petitions and case without the emotion and anger of so many of the mothers who felt their injustice too keenly. So successful was she that in August 1943 the occasional grant of twenty-five yen from the British Government was paid in full for the first time to all over five, and later even when the amount was decreased, financial discrimination against the children was over. It was moreover eventually admitted as true that it was the presence of children which had softened the Japanese attitude to the camp as a whole. They and the women among us gave a grace to our living, and helped and encouraged by our Christian faith, we were raised to a level above that of a barrack of unattached men.

It was natural that as the one complete family in our crowded flat we should in some ways be a focus of the life round about us. For one thing, we alone had a clock, and every few minutes a head would be put round the door enquiring the time. Also children

attract others, and all the young round about us seemed to gather in our tiny room. The veranda was a special haven of refuge as here they could play undisturbed. Out in the camp, as gardens covered the hillsides, there were fewer and fewer places for them. "Get out", "You can't play here", "Scram!", "Keep quiet", they were constantly admonished. "Why must grown-ups be so miserable?" asked Vee. Even the swing was put out of action: while the workshop ran off with the see-saw. The children were beginning to suffer from strain. They had to learn to fight for their own rights. One day at the leaky hydrant in the road Joy was filling a tin. "Move off: get out of here! I want some water," said a man putting his bucket down in the road.

"I have as much right to get water as you," replied Joy. "Besides, as I am only a little child, if you were nice you would help me instead of being so cross." "I didn't mean to be rude," she said to us later, almost in tears, "but unless you speak like they do, they don't understand."

The children developed a kind of repressed excitement and urgency which came from the life they were leading. Patience and humility are the virtues of a secure society, but not of an internment camp, where to sit back in patient apathy would be to wait for death and burial. One's very life depends on being up and getting. The child has to be out in the street on the watch, gathering chips of bark as the men chop the firewood, or rice which has leaked in the gutter from the sack. The struggle was very real, and so, like any children of the slums, they struggled with each other in rivalry. Quietly co-operating over games,

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cards or dolls on our floor removed some of the restlessness. Here at least they always felt secure and were wanted.

They all had their hobbies. Guy kept golden silk spiders in little match-boxes and fed these 'tigers' with live flies which he grew expert at catching. One of his friends had forty spiders in boxes, each requiring a fly every day. Guy also kept tadpoles in a jam tin and he would watch them for hours. "I wonder if they know they are in water?" he one day asked Joy. "Do you know you are a prisoner?" she replied. "Perhaps like you they forget sometimes." Joy, not having postage stamps, collected labels from tins, but both the girls were really happiest with their dolls. They had a family of a score, who lived mostly in cardboard box beds. Three of them were the doubles of the babies in the flat, their behaviour following that of their living namesakes. When David George cried, Vee or Joy ran to the box where the dolly also was crying. When Ronnie ate, his double was fed. But life was not easy for the poor dollies' mothers, especially as the real mothers, who did not allow their maternal instincts to run riot, started using the stick at a very early age. Their babies, they said, got on their nerves, though the mothers themselves worried the rest of us by their impatience. "Good God! Go to sleep. If you cry again I'll hit you. I'll kill you," was a frequent loving good-night. The babies, however, seemed to thrive despite their treatment: perhaps they knew the real affection which was hidden by the words which resulted from the strain. The sensitive Vee took them both to her heart, and they ran to her in trouble. Happily, she in turn could seek refuge with Gladys

who, however tired she might be, never failed to be patient and loving with little David.

The children also had school. It was a change from the flat and gave us relief, though Joy was too conscientious a plodder to find it all fun. "Why should I go to school?" was a frequent question.

"So that you may be educated," Mary would tell her.

"But I don't want to get things in my head. They are only confusing. Children are happier without education," Joy argued. However, they would all three run off together every day and then return tired and hungry.

Vee went up to the hall at St Stephen's for Junior School but Joy and Guy had their Kindergarten in the central recreation room, near the canteen. I also used to go to school, but in the afternoon. When the Americans left I had taken over the teaching of science to the top forms in the Senior School.

Education in camp was really a notable achievement. Without help from the Japanese, with goodwill from the parents, though less than bare encouragement from the community as a whole, with pathetically little in the way of books and equipment, the boys and girls were given the best education that could be managed; and for some of the two hundred children it was the only education they would ever receive. At first there were no chairs and the children had lessons sitting or lying face down on straw mats on the floor, or kneeling on grass-filled cushions. Later the Red Cross was able to get some chairs and desks sent from a school in the city, though there still were not enough for the smaller ones like Guy. Those with the desks soon found a new pastime in dull lessons: poking the bugs which lived

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in the cracks. The shortage of paper and pencils meant that most of the children suffered from cramped style and lack of power of expression, though many became extraordinarily receptive and developed retentive memories. At least they had the advantage of teachers who were determined that the children, at any rate, should suffer as little as possible from internment.

The school was not the only one of the wider camp activities that affected our flat. The Church in many ways took the place in our lives that it had for those who lived in the Middle Ages : its modern rivals of public house, cinema or Sunday excursion were absent. Anglican or Congregationalist, Methodist or Quaker, led the services in union one with another, while we worshipped conscious of our deepened fellowship, children of one Father. Holy Communion was celebrated by the clergy according to the custom of the particular church they represented ; but all Christians were welcome to participate in any, all or none of the celebrations and yet feel no loosening of the common bonds of fellowship.

It was a brilliant rallying cry when the Church gave us as a watchword the challenge from Ephesians : *Redeeming the time*. It inspired us to use our imprisonment to make up for opportunities already lost, and to fit ourselves spiritually and mentally to take our part in the new world when the war was over. We had a chance that would never come again. We redeemed the time by reading the excellent books in camp, by attending the lectures and classes for adults which became such a feature of our life, and in a score of different individual ways.

Duncan Briggs, tall, thin and grey, a retired architect, with a scholarly demeanour who was one of the five

men in our flat, especially appreciated the lectures provided as alternatives to the endless discussion of rumour, food, and canteen prices. "I am free of my big house and my money," he said. "My share in the camp work does not take more than two hours; I can read when I wish, and go to lectures if I so desire. There are concerts, and in my old life I had no time for music. If I want to, I can meet all the best people every day. There is no need to make appointments, and nobody is too busy to talk. Doesn't it make you realize what life might be?" he enthusiastically asked. "We must never go back to the old way of living. We must have leisure to develop minds and bodies; leisure to live. We must get away from the waste of individual effort in tiny houses in a servantless world after the war. As an architect, I see we need different types of homes. . . ." He was finding time to think about the future in a calm detached manner.

Others like Briggs found that their minds were clearer. Perhaps it was the simpler living, the absence of over-feeding, the general asceticism, that quickened thought. We had got used to our low diet, and had not yet become excessively weakened by its long continuance and its dwindling nature. We were refreshed by the absence of the ephemeral literature of the world—the daily papers, the magazines—and the absence of civilization's noises. The sight of the blue sea ever breaking in white waves against the brown rocks, which rise to the green hillsides, was itself a great blessing. However strong our anxieties might be, however much our captors might try to make life difficult for us, nothing could take away the beauty of the sea, the islands, the mountains and the sky, so rarely other than deepest

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blue. From such sheer beauty there came peace which unconsciously soothed and freed our troubled minds.

There were some, of course, who could not be persuaded to redeem the time. "I can't help it. I don't like lectures," said Mona Moon. "When I've finished my jobs I find playing Patience is all I can manage. Also, I don't want to go to study groups. Why should I? I don't want to listen to people with different views from myself. It's so tiring." She was, however, never weary of discussing our rations. "I don't think they have any food value at all," she declared. "The rice is only cargo rice, sweepings from the dusty holds of rice ships. It isn't fit for human beings; it's just alive with maggots, to say nothing of the bits of string and bamboo, glass and nails. I told the Reverend Green he ought to have refused it: and what do you think he said? That it could hardly be called unfit for food when there had been Chinese in Hong Kong living on that sort of thing for years. I'd have thrown it in the faces of the Japanese. It's a good job, I say, that Green is no longer our local chairman."

It was true, Paul Green had not been re-elected. In the early days some of the clergy very naturally obtained positions of leadership. They had names which were well known in Hong Kong, and were unselfishly ready to shoulder responsibility and hard work. Moreover, the people trusted them because they were representatives of the Church. No matter how much they might openly ridicule or ignore it, in their hearts they knew it could be trusted. Paul Green had really done well: but like Candide 'he found that while he was labouring to make people happy, he had only made them ungrateful'. Criticism increased as things became

easier in the camp until he and a number of others like him were thrown out of office, though only for a time.

The children, unlike the Moaner, did not seem to mind the monotonous food. Joy and Guy would eat up their rice and stew, though Vee would carefully pick out the cockroach excreta and arrange the little black specks in a ring round the white rim of her bowl. "See no weevil; Hear no weevil; Eat every weevil, is my motto," shouted Guy, waving his spoon. We had only one knife between us so we always used spoons, and had to tear meat, when we had any, with our fingers.

Occasionally we had jam from the canteen which we put on our rice as a pudding. "It's strawberry this time," said Mary. But Guy after tasting it shook his head. "No, it just tastes like plain jam." How true: it all tasted the same, rather tinny; but how thankful we were for the sweetness. Sometimes we were also able to buy a few bananas: and they gave us a real sense of riches. Or the black market sold us an orange and then we could have two sections each at a meal.

Vee would frequently slip away from our table to see if there were second helpings to be got from the queues; after waiting nearly an hour, she once came back flushed with pleasure. "Look what I've got! A great lump of gristle, that was good, wasn't it, Mummy?" It was. We divided and chewed it, until after some minutes of silence Guy asked "I've chewed it well, now may I swallow?"

The food situation was, however, entirely changed by the arrival of Red Cross supplies. Three times during our internment we received these gifts from abroad. Their arrivals were outstanding events, though the

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many months when we had nothing extra far exceeded these brief periods of plenty. The first lot came from Lourenço Marques on the ship that had taken the Americans away ; but it was not until November 1942 that we got it. We each got two parcels about the size of a boot-box, and a share of another. There were fifteen or sixteen things in each and a tablet of unperfumed soap. " I have glucose sweets," cried Joy with shrieks of excitement. " And a tin of sausage," yelled Guy. " And the lovely cellophane ribbons for packing," said Vee ; " we can use them as decorations for Christmas." " The boxes will do as beds for the dolls," suggested Joy. Not a thing was wasted—string, wrappers, boxes, packing, labels for note books, and tins. Even better than the parcels were foodstuffs that arrived in bulk : sugar and tea, dried fruit and tins of bully beef, and meat and vegetables. These really kept us alive through the winter, and indeed gave us energy to live fairly well.

During this period when food was more plentiful the camp was at its best from a physical point of view. The resilient young men and women had a power of recovery which few of the older people possessed. They played soft ball nearly every day, a fashion started by the base-ball playing Americans before they left, and they took part in concerts and ballets. They were like gods and goddesses those days. The unhealthy fat and sloth of our pre-war living had gone and there was a physical perfection which was shown to advantage by the scanty clothes which were all we had to wear. Bare legs and usually bare feet, brief shorts, and for the women, a gay sun-top, made us feel that we were not in Stanley but in Arcadia. Every morning a score or

more of women on the roof of the married quarters, were keeping themselves young and beautiful with rhythmic exercises. It was lovely to see them. It was also a joy to watch the woodcutters at their work. There was a pleasant rippling of the muscles under the sunburnt skin, glistening with sweat, as they swung their axes or sawed the logs into small pieces. They were as physically fit as Chinese coolies, and these British young men feeding on rice, yams and vegetables, showed that they were able to withstand the physical strain despite the paucity of diet. They not only gained a new sympathy for Chinese labourers but also convinced the few Chinese and Japanese who saw them that they were not effete.

The beach in those days was a godsend, adding to our physical and mental health. A little bay beyond the barbed wire, south of the prison, was opened for our use after the Americans went, and yearly after that from May to October. On afternoons when there was no school, until later when we were too weak to make the journey in comfort, we went regularly to the hot white sand and looked out over the blue sea, entirely forgetful of the camp. The guards were behind us, counting us as we descended or climbed the steps. We felt we were free : the children could shout and play in freedom and have no one to stop them. Vee and Joy soon learnt to swim, but Guy took a year or more before he too was a water-baby, diving off the rocks, swimming about in the warm refreshing water. It was internment-de-luxe to lie stretched on those hot sands, enjoying some of the best bathing the whole world has to offer. Guy, tired of chasing crabs, and spotting jelly-bugs, picked up a shell and held it to his ear. " La, la, la, it

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says. No, it doesn't, it is joy, joy, joy," and throwing up his arms in glee, the little five-year-old dashed happily into the sea.

Sometimes the children were able to catch one or two tiny fish which we steamed on the rice for supper. Half a mouthful and it was gone, but it gave them pleasure. At other times they gathered winkles, and then after boiling them with a little soy and oil, our meal lengthened to an hour or more as we picked them one by one with pins and imagined we were being better fed. Once, very tired, blistered from the sun, sand still on our feet, we dragged ourselves home from the beach, looking, as usual, into dust-bins round our block. In one, to our great joy, we discovered sheets of gelatine which someone had foolishly thrown away. Certainly they were dirty, but the cockroaches and their remains, the dust and spiders' webs, were soon brushed off. As it was too hot for jelly we made ourselves drinks, flavoured with mint leaves from the garden which helped to hide the glue-like taste.

As the Red Cross supplies were eaten, we passed the peak of our life in the camp. The war in the Pacific was growing nearer and the Japanese were finding it harder to look after us. In March 1943 our flour, which was all pre-war stock and in poor condition, was cut and eventually came to an end. It was a bitter blow to so many who found that a small amount of daily bread had made the rice diet possible. The calorific value of the food, which had been 1400 when we first came in and had risen when flour was issued to 2200, dropped to 1100 when the flour was all gone. At that time Mary had to have glasses which the Welfare was able to get made in town. They magnified slightly

and the children would borrow them in turn at meal times to look at the dwindling scraps of meat or fish we received. "You don't feel quite so hungry," said Vee wistfully, "when the food looks bigger."

Mary, herself becoming hollow-cheeked, would often gaze anxiously at the children. Vee, now ten years old, was growing taller but was very thin and weighed less than she did when she came to Hong Kong. Joy was pale and often ailing; even Guy seemed to tire more easily now. They were perplexing days as there was so little we could do. The Hong Kong dollar was finally abolished and the military yen established; but even though some people might have money, there were strict limits imposed on the amounts to be purchased at the canteen. Our extra cooking was more difficult. Electricity had been cut and could no longer be used by private individuals except in a very limited manner. The one compensation was that when the Japanese had to close down part of the refrigeration plant in town they sent us some scraps of pre-war New Zealand mutton.

The days of Arcadia were passing. The young gods and goddesses were becoming too gaunt to be lovely, though there was still a valiant attempt to keep the place gay like a fancy-dress ball with clothes made from bath towels and curtains, and from some Red Cross clothing which had come. Especially we valued some thick khaki cloth pullovers in sufficient quantity for everyone to have several. They kept us warm through the winter. The men used theirs to make windbreakers and long trousers; while the women made warm skirts, shorts or blouses, and embroidered them gaily with wonderful skill. Not a child but had something pretty and warm to wear. Footwear was scarce, and most of

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us had made wooden clogs, which hung to our feet by a strap over the toes ; as we clattered about we were at least safe from the cuts and sores which so quickly went septic. If ever we started to grumble we reminded ourselves of the comments of a Jew who had fled from the Nazis to Hong Kong. " If I knew that my family in Europe was nearly as well off as the people in this camp, then I might begin to believe in God—just begin."

The blonde Elma Dale's buoyancy would often desert her. " It cannot be long now ? Tell me, Mary, it cannot go on much longer. I cannot stand it much more." But day followed day ; there seemed no conclusion. Then on Empire Day in 1943 there came great excitement. The news spread round the camp in a moment. People left their pans on the stoves, their clothes in the baths, and ran to the Community Council office to read the notice :

As an act of grace, the Japanese authorities have consented to arrange for the repatriation sometime during the summer or early autumn of women and children, the aged and the very sick.

A sigh of relief went up from all quarters, the very food tasted better, the rooms seemed more possible, the congestion less oppressive, for there was new hope in our hearts. True, some of us would be left, but the women and children could go ; Vee, Joy and Guy would fatten and be fit once more. " Thank God, oh thank God," said one lonely old lady. " I have been feeling that I could never make it, but now I shall live to see my family once more. I would have hated to die without seeing my grandchild."

" What shall we do with our bowls when we go ? " asked the children.

"Leave them for Daddy," said Vee.

"Let us smash all the rest and then no one can use them," declared Joy, into whose heart the iron had entered.

"Let us leave them for some nice Japanese," suggested Vee.

But Joy would not have it. "They never gave anything to us."

"If we are kind to them," argued Vee, "it might make them kind to the Chinese and to others in the camp when we are gone."

But the days still went past, summer and autumn, but no repatriation came, except for the Canadians. In September 1943 they left us, smiles all over their faces. We said good-bye to our Canadian friends. "I have just had myself weighed," said a man from the prairies. He was burly when first we had met him, but now he was shrunken, with wash-board ribs, the empty skin hanging over the top of his shorts. "I was over 200 pounds but now I am just 110. I never weighed less in my life," he added impressively.

"My! Your mother must have been surprised when you were born," and in laughter we forced back the tears which were not far away.

They loaded us with presents: their mugs, knives and spoons. They gave us their collection of nails, the odd bits of string, and the toilet paper, that most treasured possession of all.

We sat among the trees on the hillside near the cemetery watching them go. The north-east monsoon was beginning to blow. The strong dry wind had swept the clouds from the clear blue skies, the humid heat of summer had gone and fresh beautiful autumn was upon

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us. Out in the bay lay the *Tei-a Maru* bound for Goa. Even if we had known that our friends were going to sail under conditions worse than ours at Stanley, with insufficient to eat, we should not have cared, for they were going to freedom. With envious hearts we wished that we could go too. We sat, gazing, not speaking, rejoicing to see something different. The sun sank behind the islands, a red ball of fire, which transfigured the hills. The ship lay in the strip of flame that stretched over the sea. We still sat and watched. A few lights were glimmering on board, but the camp bells were ringing and we had to return to our blocks. Next morning the *Tei-a Maru* was gone.

Our life continued, almost as if nothing had happened. We were caught up in our established routine, but we sang a new jingle :

*We're going to go to Goa
When we go away.*



CHAPTER VI

THE MIDDLE YEARS

Quo vadis?—gardens—communal and individual effort—camp ethics—discipline—January 1944: a military internment camp—festivals at Stanley



"This week I'm the gentleman and you're the coolie," Briggs the architect had said to me that morning.

We took it in turns to sweep the stairs and empty the flat's garbage can. This weekly rhythm, like the ticking of a watch, marked the passage of time; but there was nothing to indicate the hours and days. There was an eternal sameness about our life; someone had been able to relieve his feelings by writing in chalk 'The same yesterday, and today, and for ever' above the place where our food was served. Events that had gone seemed to telescope into each other: the Christmas Days we had spent in camp, the Easters, the summers, seemed each to blend into one Christmas Day, one Easter, one summer.

"When did your pain start?" Dr Frost asked one

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of his patients. "Two years ago," the man replied; but he meant 'four'. The years in the camp were apart, beyond the ordinary reckoning. In some ways it was as though we were on board ship, out on the high seas. It was a time of transition. No one knew when we would reach our destination. We had no news from the outside world except bulletins from the ship's radio and that was Japanese controlled and very one-sided. We did not know where we were going, though few doubted it was Port Victory in a new world.

"How much longer will it be?" our neighbour Colonel Taylor, a retired staff officer of the first world war, rhetorically asked Joy on one of the few occasions when he noticed her.

"Robinson Crusoe was on his island twenty-eight years, two months and nineteen days," answered Joy, who had just been reading about him.

The Colonel, a shrunken, earnest little man, groaned and went on his way. People were, however, ceasing to think of weeks or months. Hopes that we should be out next month, before Easter, by Christmas, were not heard as frequently as in earlier days. "Our children may live to get out even if we don't," said Elma Dale, watching Ethel and Ronnie playing in the street. Just as the camp seemed never to have begun, so it seemed as though it would never end.

The Church for the second time roused us to active thought. After the Canadians had gone, by a week of special open-air talks and services, it asked us the question: *Quo vadis?* We still remembered to redeem the time, but now we paused to ask

where we were going. We could not see the end : but we prayed

Teach us to lay our course by a star we have never seen, to dig for springs we may never reach. Oh God, in the name of Christ Jesus, our Inspiration, give us the courage to wear out our hearts after that which we may never attain.

Mary, Gladys and Mabel Thornbridge were talking in the dark on the main veranda. "I have prayed every day for more than two and a half years that we should get out : but we are still here. God has not answered. I do not believe in prayer," declared Mabel.

"Try instead to pray for strength and capacity to learn why you are here," suggested Gladys. "I imagine I am here for a purpose and that before we get out we must learn our lesson."

"At any rate, it is an opportunity to learn, and we need to pray for strength to take advantage of it," said Mary. "After all, when, or even whether, we get out is not the most important question."

"I was too easy-going," Gladys told them, "and I had to learn to toughen up and be able to fight my own battles. I have to learn not to be frightened of other people. I need to be more independent, yet not hard but still considerate of others."

"I think I was too lazy and depended too much on my servants," confessed Mabel. "I have to learn to look after Nancy and not think of myself, my bridge and my novels. I get so tired and then I take it out of poor Nancy. I think Elma has to learn something of that too, also not to be so uncompromising, but more thoughtful of others."

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And talking about this later, Mary added " And what of us ? What is it we have to learn ? "

As I sat on the rocky hillside between our blocks and the hospital it seemed to me that we were learning to deepen our understanding of the Chinese among whom we usually lived : and to develop a practical sympathy for all whose standard of living was, like ours now, near the starvation line. The landscape had changed during the last year. The scrub, the bushes and small trees had vanished. Everywhere there were little gardens, all the waste land had been cultivated. Rocks had been moved, and others covered with soil so that lettuce or spinach could be grown. I kept rubbing my eyes, hardly believing that I was not back on the hills of Chungking. The tiny paths twisted and turned round the plots in a manner which showed the ungenerous nature of the gardeners, who grudged yielding more than they were forced of their ground, every square inch of which was valuable. Below me Mary was digging with a Chinese *tsu-deo*, her bare back and legs burnt to a shade which would not have disgraced our Chengtu gardener. Little children, almost naked, were toiling along the winding paths with old tins full of water : they were too heavily burdened and were not Chinese children but our own. Even the smell was authentic. That morning I had waited in a queue for nearly two hours at one of the septic tanks by the side of the bay and had struggled back with two buckets of sludge to revive the dead sandy soil out of which heavy rains washed all the nourishment.

So many of the things which we had thought of as typically Chinese were merely the normal results of human endeavour in the presence of need and the

absence of money and tools. To this sometimes was added human inertia. Queenie Cooper, who spoke of 'the dirty Chinese' and called the Carona girls 'niggers', had a pile of clothes which stank and fermented as they waited to be washed. They had been under her bed for a fortnight and then, as Elma Dale and Mrs Moon made caustic remarks, she removed them to the bathroom where they remained another two weeks in a corner. "Though," said one of the men, "that's not as bad as a pal in the workshop whose room-mate has not made his bed for over six months." We learnt later from internees and prisoners from other camps how similar their lives were to ours. Environment compels the design, though the poor in China and India have been destitute for so long that the pattern has become more rigidly part of their nature.

Like so many others we had staked our claims on the hillsides and now had two gardens. One was facing the north where we had to build walls, of stones, old tins filled with soil, and plaited pampas grass, to keep off the cold, dry north-east winds; the other, in which we were all working that morning, was facing the forts over the prison. It was sheltered by the hill from the winds and was hot and secluded. Mary spent most of her time in her gardens: it was a refuge from the turmoil of the flat, and although the work was hard, she enjoyed the relief it afforded. When school was over, we all of us shared in the work, carrying water or soil, but it was Mary who bore the main burden. It was to her we owed health and possibly life itself, for on the bare rations we could hardly have lived. Once the gardens were established we had a vegetable stew every day and, for several months of the year, raw

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tomatoes and salads of various spinach, onions and greens. The sweet potato was our greatest stand-by. The leaves we ate either raw, or boiled with silver beet or Chinese cabbage in our stew. The roots when they came gave us bulk and a sweet taste which we craved, and when we had any oil could be fried as a treat. The dried stalks we used as fuel in the chatty. Our banana and papaya trees were planted too late to give fruit, but the peanuts were a joy.

"Why do you grow only vegetables?" asked Vee. She planted a small patch with flowers; and was happy when her lilies were placed on the altar, or when she could give a bride a chrysanthemum bouquet, and take nosegays to her friends lying in hospital. Joy compromised by growing nasturtiums among the tall arrow-leaved taro, as they not only looked pretty but the leaves could be eaten. Guy, like the ants, had a passion for cape gooseberries, and for eating raw corn on the cob. "The plants are growing so quickly," he told us one day. Especially in our south garden the growth was rapid, but it was Mary who groaned as she tried to keep up with the work it involved. It was amazing how the yard bean pods grew to two or more feet in length, while the Jack beans would have covered the whole garden if she had let them.

Some of our surplus tomatoes or vegetables we occasionally sold to get money to spend at the canteen, but usually if we had any extra we gave it to some of those who had none. There were many who never had gardens, who were too old to manage the work, or who considered that the returns did not compensate for the labour involved. One of the amazing things was that for so long gardening was a matter of individual

effort. Communal ventures had been suggested but they never succeeded. Finally, it was the Japanese who forced us to co-operate in an attempt to supplement dwindling rations.

By that time, however, the men no longer had the energy required for breaking the land and watering the crops. The Japanese promised double rations of sugar, oil, vegetables and rice for stated numbers of those who would work. Consequently a new era of communal labour commenced. No one by this time had energy for games so the playing-fields were dug up for communal use.

The whole question of communal and individual effort was now raised among us. Those who had gardens on the waste hillsides remained in possession of their plots, but the communal gardens were worked by men who, like the kitchen, sanitary or medical workers, district chairmen or block representatives, received payment of additional food from our basic rations or from extras provided by the Japanese. As the number of jobs which carried rewards was limited, the kitchen and ration-carrying squads became exclusive clubs; without influence it was almost impossible to get into them. These vested interests were naturally opposed to the idea of 'work for all and no extra rations'. Actually the extra ration was bare compensation; the real reward of a constant job was an occupied mind and greater chance of physical health. The spirits of the men began to improve. Being in a gang gave a sense of co-operation and friendship. "My husband is no longer depressed," said the wife of a doctor of science, "now he has regular work on the dust-bin squad." It was a sobering thought that the graduate of one of our oldest

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universities should find real consolation in emptying dust-bins and cleaning out drains.

The sisters at the hospital who laboured in six-hour shifts, and those of us who were teachers or preachers, were not at that time counted as workers, but we managed, like the mothers of families and others who really toiled, to live on the basic camp ration. When we went to draw our food it was a little humiliating to be called 'non-workers'. It upset Joy, and one day she said, "Daddy, you have been teaching all the afternoon, it isn't fair you don't get extra. I am going to tell them you are a worker. Joan's daddy sweeps the gutters—it doesn't take him half an hour, and they get extra."

"But if we get it, I shall have to eat it all," I teased her.

"Oh no," she said, "we all would share."

It was not the lack of food that mattered, but that the community itself was blind to the importance of musicians and preachers, as well as teachers, in maintaining a proper balance in our life. It was natural, however, that in disorder such as ours the arts and learning should take second place, though many individuals realized their importance for the upkeep of morale. Some with professional skills were so hungry that they frankly sought labour for which they were not fitted but which gave them food.

The worker had every advantage in a situation where a little could mean a great deal. One of our neighbours who worked in the kitchen could get garbage and wood ash for his garden and so get better crops to supplement his already increased ration.

"He put his rice and a lot of food in the dust-bin," said Joy one day with real horror, "and yet he has

plenty to eat." We were able to make a 'dust-bin stew' from his discarded cabbage-stalks, carrot tops and turnip-tips. It was always a shock for the poor to realize that the wealthy could throw valuable things away and still have sufficient for themselves.

It was not always easy to discover the line dividing communal and individual rights and ownership. Joy, having been gleaning in the road after the woodcutters had been at work, brought home a large chip which obviously should have gone into the kitchen.

"I think you had better take it back," Mary told her. "The small scraps we may have but pieces like this are too big."

"But it was far away," she argued, feeling that because it had flown from the axe beyond the usual sphere it was no longer communal but available for anyone who could get it. "Besides, the woodcutters themselves take wood, I have seen them putting it into little bags. And they get extra rations and we don't."

"In any case," said Guy coming to her rescue, "I bet that if God had been there He would have taken it."

It was hard to develop moral standards in a child, especially when the delighted Elma Dale would shout to Ronnie, who had struggled up the steps with a piece of wood nearly as long as himself, "Good boy, now go and get me another."

By common consent, if a thing were not in use it was fair for any individual to remove it. "Whose is this tin?" Goldburn would ask. "Because if nobody claims it I am taking it"—and he usually did. We grew our beans up wires stripped from the useless electric bells of our flat. The hot-water pipes were taken to run cold water to private gardens. There

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was an outcry, however, when the wooden seat at the babies' clinic was used by some individuals as firewood.

When men who were helping the Japanese to store rice in the godown took some it was no theft ; but it was an unforgivable crime to steal rice from the community after it had been issued by the Japanese to our quartermaster.

Some form of discipline was needed to deal with offenders. District Complaints Committees met to hear the cases of any who might have broken the camp constitution by acts which were harmful to the public welfare. If further action were required the case could then be brought before the Camp Disciplinary Tribunal on which were sitting ex-magistrates or other worthy citizens selected from a panel. It was a triumph for the camp that crime in its cruder forms was unknown. There was no prison, no real disciplinary punishment available except publicity or a nominal 'fine' of stopping a man's cigarettes for a week, making him miss his turn at the canteen, or stopping any extra rations he might be due as a worker. Of course there was also the possibility of damaged reputations. Despite the sympathetic understanding of fellow internees, the business man who had been found guilty of stealing a cup of raw rice from the kitchen might discover that it was remembered, and the lad guilty of thieving canned food from his room-mates might find that it would be difficult to obtain a position when he was free.

There were always those people who could never fully enter into a community spirit of service above self. "Someone will be disappointed," said the man serving boiling water to the queue. "I haven't had

mine yet and I want a lot." It was hard to get away from the desire that although someone would have to suffer it would not, if we could possibly help it, be ourselves. Also, there was always the problem of those who would work for money and of those with funds who would persist in trying to buy an advantage for themselves. Appeals were made to their public spirit, but as long as people gave at least some of their labour free, there was little that could be done. Community tools, such as hair-clippers or saws and pliers, were only issued to those who worked for no reward, but a packet of cigarettes, or later, when they became rare, a single cigarette, was usually expected for services rendered.

Some of our British attitudes did not make things any easier. We tended to withhold praise from those who did their duty, but were very free in criticizing those whom we thought to have failed. A European fellow internee asked us one day, "Why do you British bite and snarl at each other? It is true that from your destructive criticism a certain standard of efficiency results, but it does not make life happy—unless you really enjoy that sort of thing." Perhaps we did; in any case we were learning a realistic lesson in community living. The theories of our comfortable arm-chairs were gone, and from the rough give-and-take, and occasional startling cruelty of hungry men in the mass, we were learning with surprise something of our own impulses which in ordinary life are submerged below that veneer of good manners which it is worth a good deal to preserve.

The Swiss Family Robinson did not outshine the camp for ingenuity in exploitation, nor could the kindred Heath Robinson have improved some of the

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devices that were invented. Machines for cleaning rice and scaling fish were wonders to behold ; while the man who discovered a swarm of bees on the beach and later developed several hives was much envied. Many found new skills. " A horse-dealer has become a good baker and fancy-cake maker ; an eye specialist now is an expert woodcutter." The family was trying to think of the transformations in camp. " A stockbroker has turned chicken farmer ; a doctor is now a dust-man." " And a father turned slave," I added, winding up the list, but Joy, sore at the work she had to do, quickly added, " Yes, and children turned donkeys." A new aristocracy was arising in the camp : those who by their skill could serve their fellows. Those with nothing to contribute, no matter how great their importance in former days, rapidly became obscure.

We were leading the simple life, but as its advocates sometimes forget, the more primitive life becomes the more complicated is it to live, and despite the greater effort required the results are less effective. " The only really simple life that I can imagine," said Mary, as she went off with her broken tools to the garden, " is one where you have plenty of money and live in a really good hotel with efficient servants to do all the work."

Each month as it passed brought a slight change for the worse ; the dirt and discomfort were increasing and our leisure grew less. There was also a new sense of foreboding. Women had not been getting letters from their husbands who were prisoners in Sham-shuipo camp. It was said that some of the men there had died, and there were rumours that many were being taken to Japan. Confirmation came when Elma Dale got a card from Japan laconically saying ' all is

well'. Anxiety increased when the *Hong Kong News* told of a 'dastardly attack by the Americans' on the *Lisbon Maru* while carrying prisoners of war. Kate Shelley had been asked to take the news to Gladys that her husband was one of those whom the Japanese reported as missing. He was already dead when that first hope-giving Christmas-time message had reached her, although the full story was not revealed until after the war. When the ship had been torpedoed, four hundred prisoners were battened down in one of the holds. After most of a day and a night those men who survived smashed their way out. George Barrie, who could speak some Japanese, was one of the first on the deck and was shot by the guards before they deserted the sinking ship. "It is unbearable," Gladys had said to Kate when she told her that George was missing, "to think that this war should continue. It isn't only our own folk but the Japanese and German babies like David who now have no fathers, and the women of all nations who will not see again the men that they love." Vee wept many tears over wee David George; and we all felt very tender towards our friend Gladys. She seemed to be filled with new faith and gave herself even more fully to her child; though we could only guess what the smile on her face must have cost.

From the near-by prison there came a vague sense of fear which spread like a cloud over the camp. Some of the British bankers whom the Japanese had kept in the city to work for them had been arrested and imprisoned there. One day the body of Sir Vandaleur Grayburn, Chief Manager of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, was sent from the prison out into the camp. His death was obviously due to lack of food

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and the withholding of medical attention and drugs. Later the body of one of his colleagues followed. Others were imprisoned there ; would they be able to live until their sentences were finished ? We knew that the noises we heard at nights from the prison were human. We would waken to hear piteous scream after scream ; and in a cold perspiration from our helpless frustration and impotence we could but lie and listen until at last the cries died away, only to return again and again. The memory of those midnight interrogations with tortures and beatings would not fade, but haunted us throughout the day.

The gendarmerie suddenly descended on the camp and ten of our fellows were carried away. Their rooms were examined and sealed. A few days later some returned under escort and dug for long hours in the hot sun in various parts of the camp, searching for buried wireless sets or other forbidden things the Japanese believed to be hidden. Later a van was seen leaving the prison. Europeans were in it, one of whom was able to wave good-bye. From one of St Stephen's bungalows strange unhappy things were seen on a waste bit of land by the jetty. An uneasy feeling depressed all the camp. Then the Japanese laconically announced that along with others from the city seven from our camp had been executed for unspecified crimes, while others had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Thirty-two men had been killed after incredible torture ; when they paraded for execution they had been heartened by a Chinese fellow-victim who had led them in prayer. Any memorial service in the camp was forbidden. We could give no expression to our loss, but from that time all sense of

security was gone. Occasionally others were taken by the gendarmes, and when any returned not a word would they speak.

There were also changes in our management that boded no good. We ceased to be called Stanley Camp and became the Military Internment Camp of Hong Kong. A new commandant came and established himself with his staff at headquarters, to which we had symbolically to lift up our eyes. This commandant was probably the most efficient administrator we had, but an uneasy suspicion grew in the camp that the Japanese were going to play a larger part in our lives. So far we had been left mercifully alone by the various administrations which ruled over us, and, although we were still forbidden to speak with our captors, new regulations were issued about our behaviour, suitable bowing and saluting. The information that more changes would be gradually introduced did not stop our fears, though they were partly lulled when the camp was controlled for some time by an official in the city who had been a consul-general in Australia, where he himself had been interned and who was friendly with some in the camp.

One of the first demands was that every internee 'who had no intention of escaping' should make an affidavit. As all who wanted to escape had already made the attempt and most of the rest of us were either too old or had a wife or children to think of, we accepted the advice of our leader and signed for ourselves and on behalf of our babies, a statement that: I hereby swear that I will make no attempt to escape while in the custody of the Japanese Government. The papers were doubtless collected and then forgotten,

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whereas if anyone had refused, a useless issue would have been raised, bringing misfortune on the camp as a whole. While normally there was at Stanley more hope than the circumstances warranted, there was at this time more despair than actually was justified. It was a blessing that some of us could escape to a world of real hope, for no cares could depress the children for long.

Another Christmas was coming. "How quickly the days pass when you are happy!" said Joy.

"You really have felt it a happy year?" I asked her.

"Oh yes," she replied, "I've loved it. We are very happy."

When the day had passed it was Vee who declared, "It is the happiest Christmas we've ever had." Though Joy was more doubtful as she felt "it would have been better with more toys and more things to eat". She had, however, to admit that Joan Carona had managed to make herself sick with sardines, rancid margarine and jam.

Christmas, Easter and our birthdays were great torches that lit up our road through internment. There were no shops at which to buy expensive presents or toys, so Christmas was just what it should be. The gifts to each other of things we had made, or simple verses we had written, the cheery greetings to all, the open-air Christmas worship, the singing of carols, the acting of beautiful Nativity plays, helped us to recapture something we thought had gone from the earth. On the first Christmas in camp the informal welfare committee sent gifts from Hong Kong to all of the children; while on the second a lonely business man whose luggage had come to the camp became a true Father Christmas and gave his family's toys to the children of our block. The kitchens after stinting

for days prepared special *chapatties*, stews and pudding, so that we could eat to the full and yet have no plain boiled rice. We ourselves had our friends to a meal to share our small tree and our gay decorations. From the moment of searching their stockings to the final good-night the children had loved every moment. "So Father Christmas did really find Stanley after all," said Guy as he laid his head on his pillow. "What a lot of things we did get."

"Such a marvellous day it has been," Joy summed it all up. For all three, it had been a time that was spiritually full; only the grown-ups could see how materially empty it really had been. The child transfigures the earth, making heaven appear in most desolate places.

Easter became a time of communal spring-cleaning and also a true festival of the Church. Each year we lifted our hearts to God with new hope and courage. One time Masefield's *Good Friday* was acted and moved us profoundly. On the second Easter we had been able to buy eggs at the canteen; and the children decorated them and took them in nests to their friends. On the other Easters we contented ourselves by following the custom of our Russian fellow-internees, saying to those we met "Christ is risen" and giving the happy response, "Christ is risen indeed".

Birthdays were our special family joy. They were planned weeks ahead; as we had really no extra food, we discussed with care who should be invited, what games we should play; and for weeks we saved raw rice and beans that we might have a cake and a 'party'. Usually we picnicked beyond the quarry, sheltered by rocks, facing the sea. Here the grown-ups could sit in

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the shade while the children acted or romped on the hillside. We had ground rice blancmange or fried rice cakes to eat. Once there was real jelly from the canteen and usually salads from the garden. Best of all were the cakes, which were usually very stiff cold pudding made with ground rice and ground beans, decorated with flowers or with egg-white dyed red or blue. On the top were placed matches instead of candles ; how quickly the numbers grew. By 1944 Guy needed seven, Joy nine, Vee eleven. Presents usually were simple : a pencil, a cradle for a doll, a needle and thread, an eraser or home-made book ; but Guy once got a clockwork ' Coronation Scot ' complete with lines.

Some children were sad that they could not join in the fun but we were forced to limit the numbers. When we had returned with our tin mugs and sardine-tin plates, and our bag of ' empties ' from one of Vee's parties, little Ronnie, who was now able to chatter, said wistfully to Mary, " Vee had a happy birthday, didn't she ? " Mary agreed. " Is the happy birthday all eaten up ? " he then asked, knowing in real Stanley fashion that food alone mattered. " I'm afraid so," said Mary, looking to see if she could find something for him. " I didn't have nothing, did I ? " he concluded with a note of regret.

The seasons like the birthdays flowed rhythmically past us. The fierce passionate summers came with great heat and violent storms as the typhoons swept near us. " It is awfully stickery," Guy would complain, but really it was cooler at Stanley than in the more sheltered Hong Kong. Our light diet meant no prickly heat, though instead we had dry irritating skins from avitaminosis and a tiresome form of

enuresis due to weakness and the watery diet. The autumns were glorious—hot, sunny and dry. We lived out of doors as long as we could, the babies of the blocks playing naked, like a litter of puppies, in the roads and the gutters. Vee could sleep out on our tiny veranda, relieving the congestion at night; the rains caught this veranda in summer and in spring the north-east winds made it too cold. As Christmas approached I would cease wearing shorts and put on my surviving rags of a suit. “Daddy really looks like a gentleman after all,” exclaimed Joy, impressed by the change. But in the cold days of January and February when the temperature went down to the low forties, though it felt to us who were hungry as if it were freezing, we had to dress up to keep warm in our unheated rooms. “It is breezing cold,” said Guy expressively, muffled in all the clothes he possessed. We sat in our big coats with blankets round us, but had to wear still more in our beds. “For two winters I’ve slept in your cardigan,” said Mary, looking in our sack of clothes, “but this year I have only this blue coat I got out of the dust-bin—it was Queenie’s, I think.”

We made our breakfast rice congee overnight and usually kept it in a hay box; but in this cold weather we would take the pan into bed, hoping it would not upset. Following the days when we could bake in the communal oven we would hurry home at night with our hot rice cakes and, after wrapping them up, give them to the children to snuggle under the blankets; at other times we heated hot bricks in the chatty. The cold never lasted too long, however, and when the sun shone once more we basked in its warmth away from our chilly sunless rooms.

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At times we looked at Johanne's island and remembered our loved ones in a world far away. "I wish we could hear from the Sneeds," said Mary one day, though we knew, from an odd letter that had managed to reach us, they had been in touch with our friends. We were often caught back by that other existence. In the half-light of dull days an old calendar picture of bluebells under trees which hung over our fire-place would light up and call us to England. The smoke from the chatty which burnt in our hearth brought the rich flavour of turf cakes at Sleights by the moors. When the weather was hot and humid, fermenting and souring our food if exposed for only an hour or two, there was a smell in the bathrooms like the Tube in far-away London. While we watched the plays, the concerts, or the light operetta composed in the camp, we were reminded that there were people who dressed in fashion-book clothes, and who did not normally sit on wooden boxes to eat rice gruel from tins. As the final curtain was drawn, the footlight reflectors made from Red Cross parcel tins would remind us that we were not now of that world in which the actors had lived. Out in the darkness we hurried to our



rooms before the curfew was rung, past the barbed wire barrier, and the guards with their rifles in hand. Our life was in Stanley, and every moment, as far as our strength allowed, had to be lived to the full, for who knew what the future might hold?

CHAPTER VII

IT CAN'T BE LONG NOW

Letters from home—air raids
—black-out—the Church—
more Red Cross parcels,
September 1944—living
deteriorates—administrative
changes—black market—
marriages



The camp was hungry for authentic news of the progress of the war. The *Hong Kong News*, with its Japanese propaganda, was not calculated to give us very much comfort though we soon learnt to read between the lines. Maps in pencil or colour had been drawn on the inner walls of our blocks, so we followed the names of places bombed or occupied, rejoicing that despite the daily reports of German and Japanese victories, the movements of armies and ships were in the direction of our hopes. When we read that in Russia "the Germans are systematically detaching themselves in replanned action which continues with great precision" we felt sure that the end could not be long delayed. After the Japanese occupation of so many islands in the Pacific and the repeated sinking of the entire American fleet it was a relief to know that

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Japanese planes had "scored near misses on two United States cruisers and had produced several columns of smoke".

When the news was absent or bad, rumours were invented as compensation. They were almost invariably optimistic and they confirmed the hope which our very despair produced in our hearts that 'it can't be long now'.

Letters from home were a touch with the reality of the outside world, but they were few and came only rarely. The five of us received sixty-five during our internment, but of these only half were from England or America. To receive a letter was like the sun coming out, and yet as one saw the ancient date and read the conventional words permitted, they became but half-heard prayers trying in vain to recall the dead to a life they once had lived. For many months we ourselves could not write, but by 1943, after an occasional letter, we were allowed as a family to send monthly a card of twenty-five words to England or America, though in addition it was possible for relatives to write monthly to prisoners of war in the Far East.

The most stirring of contacts with the world outside were air raids over the city and docks. We knew from our diminishing food, from the shortage of coal which was curtailing the electricity supply, and from the absence of shipping, that the blockade was proceeding, but an air raid gave us immediate and spectacular proof that the war was being actively waged and that Hong Kong was not forgotten. The first raid took place towards the end of October in 1942; the next was in August of the following year. From that time

there were raids which increased in frequency and grew in intensity.

Half-way through January 1945 there was a particularly violent raid, during which planes came over in waves for the best part of two days. As usual we were confined to our blocks, armed guards patrolling the roads to see that no one looked out or signalled. However, we crouched back in the windows and watched the puffs from the anti-aircraft guns, and listened for the muffled roar as load after load of bombs was dropped beyond the hills.

"Oh, how marvellous! Isn't it wonderful? I could just dance," shouted Elma Dale, her eyes flashing, after a particularly spectacular outburst. "It's lovely to think we are not forgotten!"

"It's rather hard on the people who are getting killed," I suggested, "specially as after all the Chinese are our allies."

"Well, they shouldn't have stayed, they should have left Hong Kong. I have no sympathy for them." She had completely forgotten her own stubborn refusal to go to Australia.

That raid lasted all day and finally no one felt pleasure that such things should be. As we were kept in our rooms, there could be no school, our meals were delayed, and our ordinary camp life entirely disrupted. One plane coming near dropped a small bomb on the corner of the prison, from the roof of which came bursts of machine-gun fire. Our guards also fired at the planes with their rifles. "Why does it all seem so very much worse than on Mount Cameron before the British surrender?" asked Vee, white and shivering. Next morning when the planes returned, Elma Dale

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instead of applauding was rather frightened. We gave the children lumps of Chinese brown sugar which we kept for such times, and wished that we were in a less hysterical environment.

With a deafening roar a plane unexpectedly swooped over the camp, machine-gunning the roofs of the married quarters and the road by our blocks. Another dropped two bombs on the prison, which shook our building and ourselves ; then there was a burst from St Stephen's. The children half sobbed, but said nothing, and were white and afraid. The grass which our men had collected for our fires was burning down near the hospital. Then the Japanese came running, calling for doctors and a squad for first aid. A bungalow near St Stephen's had been hit by a bomb ; fourteen of our fellows, five of them women, were killed by the falling roof and the blast, while four or five were wounded. The camp was indeed sobered : that night few of us slept. Ronald Dale, who despite a superficial toughness from his many beatings, was a sensitive small boy of three, would not go to sleep but whimpered in his bed. Nancy Thornbridge now a most responsive toddler, vivid and alert, lying in the cot next to his, sweetly assured him, " Ronnie, don't cry, you have me, you'll be safe." David George was already showing some imagination, and as Gladys held him in her arms before going to bed, he pointed to the moon not many days old, and sadly shaking his head said, " It's broken. That's the bombing ! "

The Japanese promised that in future they would not shoot from the camp, and in their paper they declared that the Americans had dropped ten bombs on Stanley despite the fact that not only the grounds

but the buildings were clearly marked with white crosses. Actually there were no marks at all, but probably they meant that they would make them in future. For days we were busy cutting the turf round the buildings and filling the great crosses so made with white stones. The Japanese also started our men making air raid shelters in the rocky cliffs. In later raids, when they had forgotten about their promise, they would pop in and out, firing at American planes if they came near us in a raid, and examining them with their glasses.

Personal possessions and goods were said to be missing from the bombed bungalow before the dead had been placed in their big grave ; the needs of the living are urgent, but the dead no longer want material things. When the friends of people who had died in hospital went to their rooms to gather up their possessions they found that things had already been taken by room-mates or neighbours. There was need for some regulation, so a camp executor was appointed to care for the goods of those who died. Like many others, we made codicils to our wills, appointing friends in camp as guardians to take care of the children if anything should happen to us. The risk seemed to be increasing rather than getting less.

We had black-out at intervals throughout internment but now complete darkness was ordered, so that not even a cigarette could be lit except under cover. When the electricity failed, some tried for a time to keep a glimmer with a wick of string placed in a teaspoonful or so of peanut oil. The Japanese, however, threatened to stop our ration of four ounces of oil, which was usually given every ten days, so the whole camp lived

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in darkness from dusk to dawn. As we were confined to our blocks after seven o'clock, we usually lay upon our beds with the children until we fell asleep. Each of us re-told stories we could remember reading; Mary and I pictured scenes from our childhood days; but best of all we made up exciting tales, each adding his portion, until the time for sleep had come. Joan Carona and Ethel Dale would sometimes creep on to the children's beds to listen, and frequently they too fell asleep and would have to be carried to their own rooms, put into their makeshift beds, the ragged coverlets drawn over their bodies which were far too thin and bony.

"An extra hour of sleep is in itself a meal," Dr Frost told us, and we were thankful that we could sleep for ten hours or more with ease. We shall always remember waking to see the skies lit by tracer bullets and flares in the night-time raids; and we still feel the agony of the times when one or other of the children was sick in bed, when to light even a match was to risk a shot from the guards on watch outside, and when our room was so crowded with its five beds and nets.

The black-out also altered the pattern of our communal life, for though we could not leave our blocks, we could gather on the staircases or landings in the dark for talks or discussion groups. In the gloom, shyness vanished, and we listened enthralled to the life stories of our friends. We were taken by convoy across a dangerous Atlantic; we were torpedoed at Murmansk; we went through Europe with a show-girl; we were with the Army or the diplomatic service. We had an open forum led alternate weeks by a Roman Catholic priest and by a Quaker. We had nights of

songs and plays. But perhaps the most precious of all were the Sunday evening epilogues when we met in the darkness for prayers together. Afterwards we groped back to our rooms feeling at one with each other and with God. During our last autumn and winter the group spirit was stronger than before. Partly this was because of these black-out talks, the communal gardening and the news being good, but also it was the Christian leaven in our midst.

It is not easy to assess the influence of the Church. Very few internees declared that they were agnostic or without religion. Among the rest there were four hundred Roman Catholics and twenty or thirty of the Russian Orthodox Church. On Easter Day and Christmas Day more than a third of the camp attended church, and half that number were communicants. Communion and a general service were held every Sunday morning, when three to four hundred pleasantly filled St Stephen's Hall. Also there were the Sunday afternoon and the short daily services, chiefly attended by the faithful and those in special need. Though Bibles were scarce, there were Books of Common Prayer, and with the help of *Songs of Praise* we lifted up our hearts to God with hope and courage.

We learnt much from each other in our joint worship. Some will always be thankful for the opportunity of becoming so familiar with the Book of Common Prayer that its words became part of their very selves; while others may have learnt that despite their value, the outward signs and the sacraments themselves are but helps to an attitude of mind and soul which may come in quiet waiting upon God. Who could forget the Christian love of the priest who, unasked, omitted

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the Creed from Matins because he knew it was a stumbling-block to the Quaker with whom he was sharing responsibility for the services? "I cannot go to church," Duncan Briggs had said when I asked him. "I cannot say the Creed. I think it dishonest to imagine the words have historic significance only and that their meaning is different from what the words in plain English express." But we did believe and know that God is Spirit ; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Also that God is light ; that He is love. There was joy in giving a little bread that it might be used for those in fellowship together with God ; there was a sense of unity when Vee and Joy lent their most treasured doll to the Roman Catholic community for their Christmas Crib.

It wasn't that the Christian men and women in the camp were outstanding in their goodness and their personalities, but having worshipped God together in fellowship behind the wires, they knew one another in that which was eternal. They could not feel neutral to each other as they had set their faces together towards God. They received the energy of each other's friendship to help them live their daily lives, to keep before their eyes the eternal values which the camp conditions brought into new relief. There were among us the few, mostly humble folk, who were being constantly drawn upon by others ; yet their spiritual reservoirs were deep, not shallow streams, so that the more they gave the more they seemed to have, for they themselves knew the secret of drawing upon God. There were those who led quiet, poised lives amid the turmoil of the blocks, helping those in need, tending a baby to relieve the mother, discovering books for

children to read, collecting food from the queue for those who were ill or weak ; or faithfully making wreaths from leaves or flowers for all who died. Some of the clergy were back in office, shouldering responsibilities that no one else wanted, trusted as honest men ; others were giving all their time to the care of the needy, visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, cheering the anxious, and enheartening with new courage those separated from their loved ones. The time had gone in the camp for effective study groups, and as individual misery increased, it was the personal contacts that meant so much.

In vigorous special services for children and in Sunday school, catchy choruses had been taught, and throughout our time the children would sing them as they worked or sat about waiting their turns to grind rice or collect food from queues. The Carona girls, like so many of the other Roman Catholic children, were poised and happy, always smiling and ready to lend a hand ; the youth groups of their church and their strong family unity gave them something good and wholesome. At school all the children joined together saying pre-Reformation prayers, and listening to readings from Moffatt's translation of the New Testament.

School was more difficult those days. The air raids which frequently came at noon interfered with the afternoon sessions, so Senior and Junior School were held alternate mornings and afternoons, in order that time missed should be shared. The older children especially were feeling the strain ; they were always hungry and found it difficult to concentrate. Usually some of the children were absent.

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"Where's Jack?" I would ask, looking round the class.

"It's his turn to work in the kitchen. He's being fattened."

"And Mary?"

"She and Tom are in hospital with tummies."

"Is Bill better?"

"Yes, but he only came out of hospital yesterday."

The teachers, too, were feeling the strain. Some had been to hospital, many were hungry, all were weary. Once they asked the children of the Senior School to write essays on St George's Day. The writer of the best one in each form received a few small pieces of brown sugar slabs.

"They were all eaten in a moment," said the headmistress, with whom we were walking home.

"I still have some," announced Vee, producing two pieces from her home-made sacking bag. "Won't you have one?" she offered; but the headmistress tactfully refused, guessing she was taking them for Joy and Guy. "Are you never hungry?" asked Vee.

"Sometimes," laughed the head, "but I'm really too busy to think about it."

Day after day she was always at her job, combining with it evening lectures: she was an inspiration to us all. Like her, the headmistresses of the Junior School and Kindergarten were the most indefatigable of 'non-workers'; while watching over us, ever eager to encourage, never failing with practical assistance, was 'The Prof.', who lectured and organized classes for adults.

Teachers and pupils were all devoted to the school, none more loyal than the humble friend who, self-

appointed, cared for our scanty equipment in the great hall of St Stephen's in various parts of which the classes gathered. He treasured our precious scraps of blackboard and the broken lumps of building material we used as chalk ; he carefully locked away our meagre books and guarded our few desks and tables lest they be carried off by those who, if they got the chance, would use them as fuel in their private cooking. In the earlier years we relied on him and, despite a cruel malady, he never failed us. When death brought him release, we who were left in the school were always conscious of our loss.

The younger children after being cut off for so long were forgetting the world outside. We had special lectures to tell them about trains and travel, about the post office, the way our land was governed, our villages and towns. In a class of fifteen only one child could remember ever having seen a sheep. "What is a river ?" a small girl was asked, but she did not know until she had the bright inspiration, "Oh, yes, it is like a big gutter." It was Joy who made the great discovery : "Do you know," she asked, bursting in one day, "that 'outside' the Dales had a house of their own ?" She had forgotten entirely that we too once enjoyed that happy experience. 'Outside' became a world as full of wonder as fairyland. "What are shops ?" "And can you buy Chinese sugar slabs, as much as you like ?" "Is there always plenty ?" Their eyes grew large as they thought of the experience that some day would be theirs.

Twice we had matriculation classes, and if internment had lasted a few months more there would have been a third examination. There were sufficient

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members of Hong Kong University for papers to be set. The first class was of children, but the second included some adults, young policemen and others, who had redeemed the time.¹ There were also examinations for deck officers in the Mercantile Marine: and suitable certificates were given to those who passed.

In those days 'camp nerves' were on the increase. They were due to overcrowding, underfeeding, anxiety, and probably in part to the excessively bright sunlight to which so much of our bodies was constantly exposed. "I never enter into arguments," said Briggs one day; "other people are so irritating that they upset me too much. I keep silent or move away."

Those who had felt an increase of mental vigour in the first years of internment were now finding it more difficult to concentrate, harder to think at all. Their sense of right and wrong seemed clouded. Was moral fibre after all, we wondered, dependent upon balanced vitamins and health? Our staying powers were dwindling. When Queenie Cooper lost, not for the first time, some of her washing which she had left several days on the line, her outward gaiety fled. "Hell," she cried, "let me get out of this bloody place. Let me get out," and she burst into tears that could not be controlled.

Later in a moment of confidence she told us about herself with a frankness which won our respect. "In England a girl of my class would have been a domestic servant, unless I'd been able to get a job in a factory; but, look here, for five years I've been living in Hong Kong like a queen. It's been fine." She was standing

¹ The certificates of those who passed were, after the war, recognized by the University of London.

in the doorway of our room, dressed in a pair of black shorts and a white blouse knotted above her bare waist. Her arms and legs had been browned by the sun to the colour of her eyes. The light was gold in her hair. She was only a child : a lovely one who had missed her real chance in the world.

" Will you go home to your mother when we get out ? " I asked her.

" Why should I ? She turned me out on the street when I was fourteen. I owe nothing to her. If *he* had lived it might have been different. We were married only two months before he was killed. He was an engineer on a ship. We met one night at a dance hall. He was different from the others—but what's the use of talking or thinking ? " With a wave of her cigarette and a sudden grimace she pulled the door shut and was gone.

She and Mrs Moon quarrelled. Queenie, who was as generous and thoughtless as Mona was calculating and mean, had taken Mona's permission for granted and borrowed her jam-tin chatty and sardine-tin frying-pan to make some rice cakes for the boy-friend of the moment. For weeks they would not speak, but divided the floor of their room into territories, one for the mothers and their children, and one each for Queenie and Mona who neither swept nor cleaned within the other's sphere. Their attitude was now, " As I have rights in this room we share, I am going to do this way and you go to blazes." They had forgotten the way of the days of better food, " As you also have rights in this room, do you mind if I do this ? "

Many of the quarrels of this period were bitter. One perfectly respectable young woman bit deep into

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the thigh of another, though for a number of years they had been bosom friends. We learnt with humiliation that the brute was very near the surface. All that we valued in good behaviour and right living seemed in danger of slipping away. Culture, we saw, could not flourish in the slums.

Then for a few weeks our food situation was better. More parcels arrived in September 1944, from the Canadian Red Cross. Instead of being brought to us on the return trip of the *Tei-a Maru* from Goa they had been taken past us to Japan. We were thankful to get them now, but regretted there was no food in bulk. However, we got drugs for the hospital and new books to read. Also each adult received three parcels, and although there were fewer for the children, they made up with powdered whole milk and strained vegetables, or Pablum and orange juice instead.

As we now had no electricity in camp, one of our problems was how to cook any extra food and vegetables we might have. The hills were scoured for twigs and grass until they were as bare as Chinese wasteland after the fuel gatherers have been at work with their effective bamboo rakes. The wood in our block was claimed by the community as a reserve, but by common consent anything within the rooms was available for private use. Gladys removed her door and cooked with it for many a month, while she hung a blanket across the space to give her some privacy. "I do not find that floor-boards light well despite the pitch," said Mona Moon. "They are better than the picture rail," commented Briggs. The men in his room had removed both rail and floor-boards and had divided them and their wardrobe equally among the five.

“ Personally,” Elma Dale added, “ I find that chairs burn best of all.” The women in the big room had not only removed floor-boards and picture rail, but their chairs and table had gone as well. Their tiny children now had their meals squatting round a suit-case on an empty black floor.

The day we pulled up our floor-boards we felt a new era had dawned. It was wintry weather and the black pitch-covered floor was gritty and cold to our bare feet. The pitch on the wood burnt with a thick black smoke which dirtied our pans and seemed disinclined to go up the chimney, so that our room gained a new unpleasant smell. “ Mister professor,” said Nancy Thornbridge solemnly, standing by me with her hands clasped behind her naked body, “ you are making a lot of smoke. I don’t like smoke.” We none of us did, but there were few complaints, even though the pitch soot meant dirtier sinks, grubby faces, and ‘ chatty hands ’ that would never wash clean. Every morning there was the continuous noise of hammering all round us as floor-boards, furniture and door-posts were split to tiny pieces for the day’s cooking.

Vegetables both from our own and the communal gardens were giving anxiety, for we needed more than the barren ground would yield. The seasoned sludge from the septic tanks was freely used, but the Japanese were not content. They declared that night soil was required. To those of us who had lived in China this seemed only natural, and Mary, like the Chinese wives of policemen, went daily to the gardens with her little bucket. Sometimes Guy took it for her, but when he did, in the spirit of the camp, he demanded a piece of sugar slab as worker’s ration. Nearly everyone took

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bottles to their gardens and watched their tomatoes grow as a result : the genteel spoke of using Vitamin Q as this seemed more refined.

The Japanese, however, were still not satisfied. They did not understand septic tanks ; but night soil they knew all about. " We use it in Japan and you will use it here," they said, and ordered that dry latrines be built. The camp was in a turmoil ; for the Japanese would provide neither boards nor screens. The Hong Kong stalwarts writhed at the indecency of it all : they thought of the women and the aged and refused to obey the Japanese. Despite their experience in the East, they had not learnt to avoid trouble by a compromise, or temporary acquiescence, instead of making an issue by a definite refusal. Our medical officer was dismissed, faces were slapped, and the work of digging commenced. " Besides," the Japanese said, " the water may fail and you must have something ready in case." They watched the progress of the work, and as the trenches again and again gave way, sometimes burying the men as they dug, the Japanese must have seen the impossibility of it all. In any case the matter was forgotten.

The Japanese in charge changed once again. The friendly official in the city who had seemed willing in a non-committal way to assist, had washed his hands of us. His friends had pestered him too much ; deputations of those who believed a strong line should be taken with our captors had made demands for food, which the American blockade seemingly made it impossible for him to grant. " We are fed like pigs," they told him, thumping on the table. " We demand that this and that be done." The less aggressive and

more conciliatory attitude of our Colonial Secretary, who was now our leader, was sounder, though it irked many.

The military now took control. While the Commandant lived in the city, his deputy, a lieutenant, came to our headquarters. He was tall and haggard, and, falsely, the impression of a slovenly nature was given by his long sword which dragged on the ground, and his heavy leather boots which scraped noisily as he walked. He was used to army life and tried to militarize us all. But when, at our weekly outside roll call, he attempted to make us stand more rigidly at attention and toe the line with precision in our squares of twenty the Ronnies and Nancys would not conform, and mothers kept breaking the ranks to pursue their wandering children. The tiny tots, indeed, got a new game from it all. "*Kurra, kurra,*" they would cry in the harsh guttural of the guards summoning attention, and then they lined themselves up for 'Ou'side ro' ca', stood at attention and at ease, bowed or sat down and had their faces smacked, just like grown-ups.

Previously we had been guarded by Chinese or Indians with a few Japanese, but this new administration introduced forty or more Formosan guards, mostly raw uneducated roughs, with little feeling or imagination. Also for a time they gave us a Christian as their interpreter. He had been trained in America as a pastor for the Lutheran Church and was one of the few Japanese who were friendly. He did not tire in trying to help those who had friends or relatives missing in Hong Kong. Gladys sought him out to ask for details about George and he was able to

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discover the actual date of his death in October 1942. After that he occasionally came up to see her. He looked thin and ill, but always had a pleasant smile on his face, while in his pockets were biscuits for David George, to whom he tried to teach a few words of Japanese. He would not talk of the war, and it did not seem fair to ask questions, but he would speak of his life in America or about our church services to which he sometimes came. The children were delighted when, at Sunday school, he sang to them in Japanese.

"It is very hard for some of the people in the camp," I said to him once when I was with Gladys when he called.

"Isn't it very hard for all of us?" he replied, and there flashed across his eyes a look of apprehension. We gathered his fellows were suspicious of him, and realized that the Japanese gendarmes and military officials were no more cruel to us than they could be to their own people. Much to our disappointment, our friendly interpreter was moved; he was the only Japanese, who had lived in the camp, upon whom no suspicion of cruelty fell.

Ever since the beginning of the camp there had been a black market for selling food that was secretly brought in across the wire. No administration had lasted very long before it became involved; but the Lieutenant's Formosan guards were fully in the business before a month was out. They were men of Chinese blood and could speak a language understood by those who spoke Cantonese. They hated their Japanese overlords and were not blind to the way the war must inevitably end. "First they come and offer you a few cigarettes, cheap," explained Joan Carona's

father, who was one of their agents. "Then when you have become friendly, the real business starts. They let you have several cigarette cartons to sell, but really what they're after is gold and clothing."

Carona was soon a black-market king. He and his family sold cigarettes, eggs, pork and brown sugar slabs when the Formosans brought them into camp. For Japanese military yen they bought gold rings and jewels, while behind it all was a complicated business of buying and selling cheques and promissory notes. Carona was specially busy in our flat. One day he noticed that Colonel Taylor had a gold watch and asked if he could get it valued. Saigo, the Formosan with whom he dealt, offered 50,000 yen, but although the Colonel had only given £10 for the watch, he refused as he did not want yen. As the representatives of the big British firms who were in the camp were frequently wanting Japanese money to give to their interned employees, Carona then persuaded one of them to give a cheque for £2000 for the 50,000 yen, and this the Colonel accepted for his watch. The firm in this way got the yen it required, and no one knew how much Carona and Saigo got between them. Another of the men in our flat sold a gold bridge from his mouth and bought two tins of mutton.

Elma Dale after much hesitation parted with her diamond engagement ring. She got 10,000 yen and a cheque for £1000. It was her hope to keep the cheque to buy another ring and build up a new home when the war was over, but the price of food was such that she had to sell it for yen before the year was ended. £1000 melted like snow with black-market cigarettes at £2 for ten, brown sugar £20 a pound, and eggs at £5

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each, while dried egg yolk and powdered milk were £25 a pound. Canteen prices were, of course, much lower, but quantities were limited and the total expenditure controlled. When sugar slabs were 400 yen a pound in the black market they were only sixty yen in the canteen, but there no one could buy more than four ounces during the month.

It was estimated that only 30 per cent of the camp were habitual customers of the market. The rest of us managed as best we could, selling our monthly cigarettes or making exchanges. For a pound of tomatoes we could get two eggs, and for about one pound of rice we could get enough money to spend at a monthly canteen. The Caronas, like the other black-market dealers, prospered. The children were no longer in rags. The girls had new pretty dresses, while Carona and his sons had new suits, and real leather shoes. Their family were stylish members of a new aristocracy that had risen in our midst. We were thankful that Joan, despite her new clothes, was the same happy child, though with much plumper cheeks, who would sit as usual on Joy's bed, tying her straight hair in rags to give her curls and singing *Waltzing Matilda* or *Roll out the Barrel* as though no change had come to her life. She was a happy playmate for our girls. They naturally never felt that she was in any way different from themselves, but sometimes we wondered if seeds of unhappy distinctions had not already been sown in Joan's mind.

"What lovely fair skin Joy has," she said suddenly one day, looking up from the floor where she was playing at home-made Snakes and Ladders. "And although Vee is dark, her skin seems fair and fresh."

Poor little dark-skinned Eurasian Joan : why must the joy be taken out of life over things that really matter so little, but which we have made to seem important ? Joy really envied the medal of Our Lady which Joan wore round her neck, and herself wore for many weeks a Coronation medal she discovered. Joan could never be quite sure she was not being laughed at, though really it was sincerest flattery from Joy. For the most part there was little snobbery in the camp ; when any Tom, Dick or Harry could have a leading barrister cut his hair for a cigarette, the old social distinctions were really at an end.

One day I was reading the banns put up on the notice board, and remarked to a woman who was one of the few still conscious of her position in Hong Kong society, " Everyone seems to be getting married these days." Putting on her glasses and reading the many un-English names, she crushingly replied, " No, quite the contrary, nobody is getting married." Whoever they were, it was hard and a little pathetic to be married in camp. Some brides, in a half-hearted attempt at a splash, were able to borrow a wedding dress that several had worn, but there could be little of the usual outward show. After the service when the Stanley feast was eaten, no honeymoon was possible, and no real privacy either. The camp tried to spare internees the major embarrassment of sharing rooms with newly-married couples, but it was not always possible to find for them a tiny room of their own. Although many of the older folk felt that the young should have waited, it was better for those in love not to delay indefinitely. Some who had been separated for so long from husbands for whom perhaps there had

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been no time for a deep-rooted love to be established, also found it hard to remain true. There were fifty babies born during internment, and as time went on this raised many difficulties for all concerned. People were warned that they should not have children as the camp milk was finished and no help would be given. Only the rich of the camp could afford the black-market prices for the food required.

Lonely women and lonely home-making men naturally drifted together. They shared meals, helped each other with the chores and with the mending. It was good for children to have a 'camp uncle', and it was a relief for the women when there were two to share the heavy burden. Much of this was innocent enough but it was easy for affection to grow and ripen. Surprisingly, Mabel Thornbridge, who had lost most of her cheerful appearance, was one who discovered too late that she was deeply involved. Little Nancy's 'camp daddy' was constantly in the room next door and the part he played in her mother's life was obvious to all. Vee and to a lesser extent Joy were both much affected. Perhaps they felt their sense of security in the family was shaken. They resented the presence of the man in the flat and said special prayers for Nancy when they went to bed. If an affair next door could so upset them, how great must be the suffering of the children of the unfaithful or the divorced!

"Oh, how I have prayed that distance and separation should not break the bonds of love that bound me to my husband," said Mabel one night. The moon was behind clouds and in the faint light which hid the expression on our faces, it was easier to speak freely. "Other women have boy-friends and they

IT CAN'T BE LONG NOW

seem to manage. How lucky they are when the men are old or ugly and with no sex appeal. But Jack is handsome ; he is so attractive. We just couldn't help it. Of course, it will not last beyond the camp ; we both know that. I shall go back to my husband then ; it will be all right. I know it will be all right. We shall build bridges, new bridges, and we shall meet across them. We must, because of Nancy. Oh, when will the war end ? When shall we get out of this place ? ”

The moon came out from the clouds. Mabel lit a cigarette and we silently stood looking over the bay, and the prison which was ominously quiet. In the married quarters a baby was crying. Beyond the garages in the gardens a bull-frog croaked. SnORES, possibly Colonel Taylor's, were coming intermittently from the men's room. David George on the veranda behind us turned restlessly in his small bed. The three Carona girls in their new pyjamas came out to look at the moon and were humming softly to themselves a few yards away. Two guards were talking to each other on the road to headquarters. Everything seemed just as it had been. Would it go on for ever ? Surely it can't be long now !



*This seems to be a good book
but at the same time
you should be a little
more I have not read it
is why I have written*

CHAPTER VIII

ENDURING TO THE END



Food — water shortage—
Christmas 1944 — the
cemetery—after the German
surrender — the last Red
Cross food ship, February
1945 — losses and gains —
Formosans and Japanese

“ Has anybody been eating anything ? ” asked Guy

by way of greeting on his return from school. I was sitting on a low stool crouching over the chatty, putting the finishing touches on the garnishings for our midday rice. We were having a special treat. The Japanese had sent in some salted fish, which tasted about as bad as it smelt, though strangely enough it did not upset us. We had eaten the specks of stinking fish the previous night, but kept the bones ; and that morning I had fried them brittle in a little oil. A friend had received a parcel from town containing bananas ; we had exchanged a little rice, which was more than the children could eat, for a couple. The bananas also had been eaten, but with the bones I had fried thinly-sliced skin seasoned with curry and some

scraps of the onions and ginger which hung in small bunches from our ceiling. It would be delicious and help the rice down. Guy repeated his question as Joy burst into the room with similar thoughts but expressed in a more penetrating manner. "You've been eating something. Where is my share?"

"It's up there," I nodded towards the shelf where we kept our spoons and tins and our surviving cups and bowls. "Three fragments of sugar slab. There is one for Vee. And don't finger them all, Guy, just to see which is biggest. They are all the same size."

Food had become so short that it was understood that everything in the house had to be shared equally. None of us owned anything eatable; as soon as it came through the door it automatically became Mary's, and she held it in trust for us all. Nevertheless we each had our private tin in which we could place our share so that we could eat it when and how we liked. Guy's and Joy's tins were always empty, but Vee's usually had something in it: a little rice crust, some pieces of brown sugar or perhaps a peanut. We were in honour bound not to take from the common stock or from each other, but it was an ideal to which Guy and Joy, at times, could not attain. Mary and I also tried, sometimes in vain, to give ourselves as much as the children, for we realized how dependent they were on our good health; but we all attempted to give Mary most for she worked the hardest in the garden.

"Anything happened?" asked Joy, scoffing her sugar. We had long since ceased eating in Stanley.

"Only the usual," I told them. "People cutting firewood, and for an hour the clatter of knives banging on the kitchen tables in the road as they chopped up

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the turnips. The workshop has taken that old refrigerator to pieces, and to add to the noise they have been knocking the dents out of the back sheet so that they can use it for the new oven. Then Elma Dale walloped Ronnie with a floor-board ; it probably made her feel better and it did Ronnie no great harm though he yelled for half an hour."

"No need to ask about Mummy," said Joy, putting our bowls on the table.

"No," I replied, "of course she's in the garden. There goes the gong!" Someone had started beating an old piece of iron hung outside the kitchen.

It was the signal we had been expecting. I gathered up the two lots of containers and went to join Vee in the queue where she would be waiting to help me collect the rice and boiled turnip stew, which we felt we had to eat though it invariably upset us. Vee was in this way saved from coming up the steps ; we were all becoming weaker with the prolonged underfeeding, and saved ourselves effort whenever possible. Our legs ached sometimes with pain, when we used them too much ; some people had to sit several times on the steps before they could reach the top storey. Many adults were finding that the climb to St Stephen's, even once a day, was more than they could manage. Extra salt helped to lessen the cramps, but it was hard to buy any and the Japanese gave us far too little in our rations. Cooking the vegetables in seawater gave us some, but not enough.

We were already sitting at our meal when Mary returned with her tin buckets full of dry grass for the chatty. She was dressed in a blue Chinese cotton sweater and a pair of my old grey flannel trousers,

patched with part of a brown Red Cross shirt, while a strip of yellow curtain was wound round her head. She kicked off her wooden clogs and said with disgust : " I've cut my toe on a stone."

" Oh, Mummy, again ! Now it will go septic." Vee was full of alarm. She herself had only recently returned from hospital after losing a toe-nail as a result of stubbing her bare foot. Every scratch seemed to become infected ; most of the men looked like lamed war horses, their thin bony legs covered with bandages to try to keep dust from the sores.

" Can we spare a little water for me to wash it ? " asked Mary as she looked at the cut. Vee poured her some out from our store. " And, Mummy, your ankles are swelling again," she observed. We judged the progress of beri-beri by the amount of œdema, and tried to keep the swellings down by eating bran and other sources of Vitamin B.

" Poor Mrs Moon may have to go to hospital," Mary told us. " Her swellings have got so bad that they are up to her waist. So she'll just have to rest."

" The mothers will then have a little peace with the Moaner away," said Joy, the realist.

" I think I must have a rest too," went on Mary, amid a chorus of " Oh, yes ! " " When ? " " I'd like to see you," from the children. " It is simply no use going on with the gardens without any water. Everything is dying. The whole thing is heartbreaking. When does it come on again ? Is it the day after tomorrow ? "

We were having one of the most difficult experiences of our camp life, with water in the taps only one day in five. For the individual it was serious enough as we

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had so few tins or bottles in which to store water, but for the community it was worse still. Open-air tanks were built, but we were only given two bags of cement and it was difficult to make them hold water. The Japanese in time sent some oil tins and drums for carrying and storing water for the kitchens. A system of tanks was dug out and built at a spring near the hospital, from which water could be carried for communal use, while anything draining from the final tank was available for any individual who liked to get it. The tanks on the roofs of the blocks were used to supply a very limited daily issue of boiling or cold chlorinated water, and also for flushing the toilets twice daily, but only for the first two days of the period. After that each room had to take it in turn to carry sea-water up the hill from the beach for flushing, with the threat hanging over us that if the drains became blocked there would be no alternative but the outside unscreened latrines. We all washed up our dishes in our rooms and every drop of dirty water was carefully kept either for clearing the drains or watering our gardens. We filled the bath and basins and as water warden of our flat I doled out a small daily ration to each person.

This was never easy. "Nancy has been sick all over her bedding and I must have water," Mabel Thornbridge would demand. Elma Dale, after cooking, her face black like her hands, her blonde hair darkened with soot, was in tears over it all.

"If ever there is another evacuation to Australia we'll go," said Queenie to her. "And I'll be first."

"Oh no, you won't," answered Elma through her tears. "I'll push you off the gang plank in my efforts to get on board. Never again! Australia for me next

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time ! I've learnt my lesson." But really she had not acquired any sense of social responsibility ; she was thinking just of her own comfort, for she turned to me and announced : " And now I want water from the bath."

" You've had your full share. What about other people ? " I asked her.

" I don't care about them. I only know I want water to wash my face and my children ; and what's more I'm going to have some."

The days when the water was on became in time almost a more severe strain than the waterless days, as we never knew at what time it would be turned off. Before then everyone must have finished washing himself and his clothes so that the bath could be filled. I soon tired of trying to persuade Colonel Taylor to wash, though with suitable bullying I usually succeeded in getting Queenie to the bath. She would wait until the approach of the zero hour and would be splashing about while the rest of us assembled at the door, exhorting her to hurry and turn on the taps lest we should be without any water for the next few days.

The water situation got easier in time. The prison was also affected and its Japanese officers were complaining, so that we eventually had water one day in three. We got so used to this that it seemed no hardship at all ; and when at last the summer rains caused restrictions to be removed, there was a cry of dismay from the carriers who were being deprived of a job with extra food. However, they were mostly diverted to the gardens, and camp life continued on its endless round.

Christmas in 1944 was one of valiant effort. Apart

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from the usual monthly canteen when on this occasion we could each purchase one pound of brown sugar slabs and half a pound of egg yolk for fifty-five yen, there was a special Christmas canteen. We were excited to see the samples on show in the window. On rough Chinese paper were set out the dark-coloured noodles, a small mound of rather dirty ground rice, and some rice-flour cakes. There were two piles of strangely coloured boiled sweets deliquescing in the humid air. Some flies lazily buzzed round a bottle of sugar-water labelled 'syrup'. To make it all more pathetic, on a box in the centre was a small bunch of yellow chrysanthemums. For our family quota we spent nearly two hundred and seventy yen, or nearly fifteen pounds sterling at the current camp rates. Although all we obtained was a handful of carbohydrates, they provided variety and change for our Christmas fare.

The real Christmas spirit was there, however. A special effort was made by the community to bake our individual cakes made of rice and bean-flour and bran. We sat in the pitch darkness in the biting cold wind outside the bakehouse waiting for the ovens to be opened. A bunch of young girls started humming carols, and soon we were all singing softly, carried along by the stream of goodwill that has flowed down through the ages. From its last remaining stocks the camp also gave each of us a small loaf of real bread. The flour was pre-war and decidedly musty. Even the weevils in it had died of malnutrition, yet it tasted as good as rich plum-pudding. We realized again that the true Christmas is not a matter of commercial enterprise. Joy gave to Vee a yeast pill wrapped in blue paper, a gift just as costly as the widow's mites. She gave me

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three pieces of notepaper for 'sirmuns and lekshurs', while from Vee came five sweets and from Guy a small piece of blackboard chalk which he had found. The children received a haversack each, made by Mary and some friends from the unwearable Red Cross shorts and shirts, and so we were prepared for the day of our release.

Christmas Eve had been a day of air raids, but on the day itself we were glad that the Allied Command showed its good taste and left Hong Kong free. The services, the singing of carols, which we hoped could be heard by those within the gaol, the visits with our friends, all helped us to lift up our hearts. The prisoners of war left in Shamshuipo camp sent, through the local Red Cross, money to buy about seven sweets each for the camp children. This gift to celebrate the birthday of the Babe raised up our spirit with great joy. Thought like this for the children was different from the usual attitude of most in our camp. "But you must remember," said Elma Dale, "that the least selfish of Hong King's men are not civilians but prisoners of war. Also many of them are sending to their own children."

1945 dawned, a New Year of hope. "It is a year of release, reunion, rejoicing, though repatriation is dead," said the Colonel as he came from room to room in the flat to wish us good cheer. Despite the poverty and the ill health, everyone was more hopeful, for surely this year must see our freedom, if not the end of the war. As at Christmas, our kitchen staff gave us extra food, but so used were we to starvation that after a few mouthfuls extra we could eat no more.

The cold weather of January and February passed

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away and the humid days of spring were with us once more. The lonely old lady who had longed to get home to see her grandchild had, like so many others, quietly faded away. We had got to know her as in Vee she imagined she could see the child she would never meet. Vee, Joy and I joined the group of her friends as we went to the cemetery on the afternoon of the day she died.

There was never anything morbid or crude about the simple services round the graves of our fellow-internees. The familiar words were read with reverence and without formality or hurry by the intimate friends of those who had gone. As the body was lowered into the grave beneath the green trees, within sound of the sea, it seemed as though earth was but welcoming back its own, while the spirit was free from the pains, the starvation, the hell that man made for his brethren in this beautiful world.

We went a little way up the bank and sat under an old grave overlooking the bay. A far-away look filled Vee's dark brown eyes, "Grannie Hall was ever so much better lately. Old people's lives seem like the flame of a candle." She had been playing with a small piece of wax before we came out. "It burns brightly; then goes very low. Once more it burns up and seems even brighter than ever, then it dies down and is gone."

We talked of the meaning of death and the words of hope to which we had listened. "After all, it is only the body which lies in the earth," I reminded them.

Joy was perplexed and broke the silence asking, "But what do they do with the heads?" How difficult it is to be certain a child understands.

The men at the grave had gently raised the coffin with its false bottom, ready for the next one who should need it. This communal coffin was a symbol of one of the best sides of camp life. We were all truly equal and whatever our station or rank, whether mighty or lowly, the end was the same. One Chinese woman with a natural desire to be loyal to her husband who had died, obtained, by bribing and appealing to pity, several communal cupboard doors for a coffin in which he was buried. Endless trouble ensued, and no one else followed her example.

"Do people each have a coffin and are they left in it, outside the camp?" Vee asked in surprise.

"What a waste of wood; think of all the meals a coffin would cook," said Joy the practical. "That will mean that this coffin won't be wasted when the war is over: whoever dies last will be able to keep it."

The gravestone behind us was one of the old ones. It told us that just over a hundred years ago the bride of a corporal in H.M. 98th Regt. had died.

*Women all as you pass by,
As you were now so once was I
As I am now so you must be
Prepared for death and follow me.*

"It seems as though there was a mistake in the wording." Vee was examining the black letters on the white granite as she spoke. "She was only twenty. Oh, and her four months old baby died at the same time."

"I wonder what they died of?" asked Joy

"Probably malaria. This place was infested with malaria and had to be abandoned," I told them.

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“ Some of the soldiers were killed by pirates in 1844’
Can you find their graves ? ” Vee discovered one first,
and read out the inscription—

JOHN STEVENS, Private, aged 38.

*His fate was sudden and severe, but God above
knows best.*

*Oh stranger, drop one pitying tear and hope he
now has rest. Remember thy Creator. Amen.*

There seemed to grow a link between those British pioneers of a bygone age and ourselves. They were most of them so young, living in a world which was foreign to them, under conditions that must have been very hard. They were mostly buried at the top end of the narrow cemetery while at the bottom there were the rows of new graves, each marked by a named and numbered headstone made from boundary stones which had been collected round the St Stephen’s grounds. As one walked along the well-kept paths, examining the names, from every grave, memory raised up the familiar figure of a friend or acquaintance we had known, a fellow-internee with whom we had shared our life behind the wires. There was something intimate and holy about that hillside garden that can never be found in a public burying-place, where so many of the graves are those of strangers.

More than a hundred and thirty were buried there : but the miracle truly was that there were so few. We had been spared any epidemics : the climate, the fresh air and simple living had enabled us to hold on to life despite the fact that we were getting weaker. The death of most had been caused through malnutrition, preventable like war itself. But with captors who

would not allow sufficient anæsthetics to come to the hospital, there was little to be done for those who had insufficient physical resources of their own. For the few cases of scrub typhus probably nothing more could have been done, but tuberculosis was laying its dreaded hand upon increasing numbers in the camp. The leprosarium where the doctors had lived was being used as a sanatorium for these cases.

In the wardrobe in our room there was a long mirror. When first we moved to the room the children had taken turns to eat their meals in front of it, gazing with unflagging interest at themselves. Visitors who came to see us would become lost in abstraction as they observed their changing bodies and strange clothes. We could hardly believe that the thin and haggard figures that appeared in the glass were indeed ourselves. Were we going to be able to endure to the end? We could not help the question arising unwanted in our minds, only to be suppressed at once by the conviction that it really couldn't be long.

Vee was not well, though she never uttered any word of complaint. She was pale, always tired and would lie long hours on her bed reading, without much desire to romp and play. Joy was still active, but was content to sit singing to her dolls from *Songs of Praise*, which is so rich in the poetic beauty of its hymns that it is hard to imagine a better book with which to be interned. Guy seemed least affected of the three though he too had festering sores that would not heal. Stanley parents tasted a small part of that crushing anxiety felt by those in so many lands who had helplessly to watch their children starve or suffer because of war and destitution. Mary and I were fortunate as we

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had each other ; so many in the camp had in addition to contend with separation and with responsibilities that could not be shared.

It was obvious from the papers that the war in Europe could not last long. Formosan guards collecting the records for the blocks at daily roll-calls would smile and say, "Not long now. Hong Kong soon." Then on May 9th there was the heading in our papers : Germany's Unconditional Surrender Confirmed. When Italy had dropped out there had been some cheering in the camp ; but this time there was no demonstration. The Japanese on the hill, despite their truculence, were nervous of us ; but as we followed the wise guidance of our leaders they had no excuse for any action. We gave no sign of the satisfaction that we felt, but everyone was happier because of the real conviction that before very long the end must come.

"Six months and we'll be out," said Colonel Taylor.

"Or Christmas, at the latest," I guessed.

"You have no grounds for such optimism," said a young Japanese corporal, who would come occasionally to lie an hour or two on Tom Spelbury's bed in the room next to ours. Tom was a ship's engineer, now attached to the workshop. The corporal had got to know him over the sale of a signet ring at headquarters where Tom had been doing some repairs for the Japanese. "Our army is bigger than ever it was, and we have more courage than the Americans," he boasted. "They have better equipment but we have more men. Each of us must kill twelve men before he dies ; and so we just go on and on. Even if it takes a hundred years, Japan is bound to win in the end. The war is not finished because Germany has betrayed us." From

him we gathered that the German surrender had been more of a shock to our captors than to us. However, we now had no official news, for when Germany was finished the Japanese stopped all newspapers coming to the camp.

The corporal was not so optimistic about himself. He had been a young school teacher in a Tokyo suburb. "I shall never get back there," he told Tom. "They are sending me to Canton to our army. My eldest brother was killed in Manchuria some years ago. Another is in Java and one went to Burma. My parents and my sisters are now alone at home."

The camp became restless and impatient after the German surrender. Elma Dale told us "Waiting for the Nimitz blitz is like waiting for a baby to be born. It is inevitable and it will hurt, but then we shall be free."

There seemed no doubt about the danger. On the hills around us the Japanese were building fortifications. Day and night there was the noise of blasting as they made fox-holes in the cliffs, levelled places for military roads or gun emplacements. They were meaning to defend the island. In an attack we should be caught without any protection, even if we were not machine-gunned out of hand as many feared would be the case. Moreover, no bombardment of Hong Kong from the sea could have entirely spared us.

"I don't care," said Elma in desperation, "let it come. I just cannot stand this endless waiting."

Gladys Barrie, who heard her, disagreed. "I would gladly wait even six months longer," she told us. "Anything to avoid the bombing and the shelling. Also any attack might mean death for the men at Shamshuipo."

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Our life was very uncertain. Previously we had not known when we would have lights or when there would be a black-out. Then we never knew at what time we should have water. At roll calls we did not know just when the Japanese would come or how long we should be confined to our rooms ; at any moment there might be an air raid and we would have to take cover in the nearest building and remain there, it might be, hours after the raid was over. Affairs were difficult to arrange, and domestic and communal routines were frequently broken.

The shortage of food was still our main problem. Very few people continued to feed in groups, for co-operation is not easy when there is insufficient to eat. There were fewer irritations and incriminations, spoken and unspoken, when each was responsible only for himself. The Japanese cut down the oil until there was insufficient for an individual issue ; the salt was halved, but to make up for this, meat, we were told, would soon be added. The oil was a tremendous loss, and when the first day that meat should have come passed by, our worst suspicions were confirmed. " We cannot deliver the meat this week," the Japanese announced, " and not next week, but after that we will endeavour to obtain it."

When, however, on a Saturday night at the end of June the first lot of meat really arrived, the camp was in a fever of excitement. " Meat ! " " Meat ! " the magic word was passed from mouth to mouth as the carcase of an old water-buffalo arrived and was dumped into the kitchens. In the dark it was chopped up and cooked at once to prevent its going more bad than it was. We hung about on the verandas long into the

night smelling the vapours from the kitchens. Next day we tasted the first meat for seventeen months, except for a morsel of Manchurian pheasant sent to us when refrigeration failed. The Sunday food queue was formed hours before its time. At last the meal was served: rice, and beef stew, rice cake as Yorkshire pudding, and small pieces of boiled sweet potato. We could hardly wait until the food was on the table. Joy and Guy had already had their fingers in the containers. Grace was sung with real and unusual gusto. There were five ounces of buffalo meat and bone for each of us. Most of it was stewed, but some was minced. The following day the stock was used for soup. Even the bones were heated in the camp-made pressure cooker until they were soft and could be used as a spread for our rice bread.

After this orgy it was harder than ever to go back to plain rice and water-spinach, with pumpkins and melons for a change. The turnip season had passed into the time of water-spinach, the boiled lettuce leaves period was still to come. For eight week-ends we got a taste of meat, and a dessertspoonful of soya beans a day. The vegetables sometimes did not come because of air raids, and as the heat of summer increased, the spinach, packed in old sacks, fermented on the way and was withered and yellow when it was spread out to cool in the shade on the roadway near the kitchen.

The small boys made bird traps of bricks, baited with rice. Many fat sparrows, wagtails or bulbuls fried or boiled were eaten. The cats were nearly all gone; even fat rats had been tasted. Those who had chickens were envied by all. For most of us, it was not anything we ate but an unconquerable hope that kept us going.

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In the earlier part of the year there had been rumour of a food ship bringing a third consignment of Red Cross parcels from Vladivostok but it seemed as though it never would come. One day, after three weeks of cold, rainy weather, the clouds lifted slightly. A Japanese coaster, seeking protection from American planes and torpedoes, had taken refuge in the bay near the camp. We were talking about her when suddenly through the mist, beyond Johanne's island, a grey shape could be seen moving. It was a large liner, the *Awa Maru*, and we made out two large white crosses on her sides. A cheer rose from the camp: we were sure now that we would have not only parcels but foodstuffs in bulk. After months of starvation we felt that we could face the future once more and be ready for the blitz when it came. In the midst of the great excitement, Elma Dale, with tears of relief streaming down her face, was kissing and hugging us all.

When the parcels arrived a deep gloom settled again on the camp. We received only old boxes from Lourenço Marques. They were obviously part of the supplies brought back after the American repatriation during our first year of internment. The Formosans hinted that the Japanese had kept back some of the first consignment as a reserve for themselves, and now had replaced them in their stores with the newly-arrived goods. They did however let us have some more clothes and boots, two cases of books, one of cigarettes and some much-needed medical supplies. We received one food parcel each, and thanks to good packing in Bermondsey, the things could nearly all be eaten, though the chocolate and tea were mostly green mould. In my parcel I found a note hidden: To

wish you the best of good luck from Mabel, aged 16. Blue eyes, brown hair and good figure. Well, my dear Mabel, I thought, by the time your parcel has reached me you are twenty. I hope your figure is still good ; my own isn't what it should be, but the food you so kindly packed will perhaps prevent it getting any worse.

The clothing or towels were small compensation for hungry men. Solicitors, Government servants, heads of great business houses, all untidy, all shoddy, waited in long lines like coolies to get the small bundles. When a few hundred toilet articles were drawn for by everyone in the camp, those who got none felt it so keenly, though these were only tooth-brushes, razor blades, a few sheets of toilet paper, that we realized the depths of poverty to which we had fallen. "I don't mind what I get as long as it's something," said a woman in the crowd, "for if I can't use it myself I can sell it or swop it."

At the beginning we had thought that internment was going to be good for us all. We should learn through suffering and living together a better way of life. Now we saw that while some of the best among us had been made better, many were not refined but degraded, the thin covering of culture having fallen away. Internment had gone on too long. Physically we had definitely deteriorated, except for one or two who had suffered from certain diseases due to over-eating and drinking. Morally and spiritually, what gains there had been were now in danger of being lost. Little by little suffering may destroy our finer instincts, emotions and thoughts ; it only ennobles when it is accepted with real consecration. It is only in the spirit of Christ that misery can be transformed by conquest

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into triumphant joy, bringing victory out of defeat, and filling the soul with satisfaction. Confirmation of this seemed to be given by the fact that attendance at church was diminishing; nearly a hundred fewer were at the main services on Sunday mornings. At the same time the number of communicants was not only maintained but steadily increased right to the time of our release.

It is impossible for any ordinary person to be moral under the desperate conditions of hopeless poverty: and no Christian or missionary endeavour can hope to succeed unless it helps to create an environment in which it is possible to lead a good life. It is by the sacrificial life of service, by the cup of water given in His name, by the sacramental washing of the feet, that knowledge of a new and living hope can be brought to those who flounder helplessly in circumstances which are beyond their own control. It still remains the ultimate test of our Christian living to see how we behave towards the least of Christ's brethren. The last message of the church in Stanley to the camp was that we were waging a warfare from which there could be no discharge. The war in Germany was over, the end of our internment was near, the barriers would be broken and the barbed wire torn away. We were restless and longed for release. For the Christian, however, release could never come; for his fight was one that lasted to the very death. He must still continue as a soldier of the Cross.

It must always be counted to the credit of the Japanese that they never interfered with any services of the Church. No matter how tense the situation and despite strict rules against other meetings, we were free to worship. Only once did they stop a social

gathering of church members, but that was at a time when the tides of war had turned and such things were generally forbidden. Singing, especially, was something they sought to check. Songs and hymns out of doors were not allowed, and even if more than ten listened to one of the few tired gramophones the camp still possessed, it was counted a concert, and only one was permitted every month. On special days of mourning we were commanded that there should be no singing and laughter even privately in our own rooms. Such restrictions helped to revive our spirits for we knew that the war must be progressing.

We had confirmation of rumours as the Formosan guards sometimes brought Chinese or Japanese papers which they gave to their agents. Our men also occasionally were able to steal an odd copy from the ration truck on the way to headquarters. Saigo, the Formosan black-market dealer, one day, was sobbing like a child on Carona's bed. "They are sending me off to Canton where we shall have to fight and be killed. Even if we remained here we should still all be killed," he added in desperation. "The Americans will burn us with their flame-throwing tanks. I wish the British would come to Hong Kong: they are not so ruthless."

The Formosans had no real interest in the war; they were more concerned with their black-market business. They too found it hard to co-operate among themselves; rival gangs competed for the spoils and did their best by any means, usually dishonest, to gain an advantage. At night they would be active, dragging their baskets of eggs and sacks of pork along the road to their agents, and scrapping with each other. Again and again the orders were given by the Japanese

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forbidding all conversation with the guards, and prohibiting trading in foodstuffs or exchange. Usually such an order was the signal for renewed activity from the gang in ascendancy, who were able to invoke authority against those who were weaker. Many internees got caught in these quarrels, some were merely slapped, others had to kneel at headquarters, and quite elderly men were kicked or birched like young schoolboys. Carona, as one of the more active agents, had to stand all through one night with his hands tied behind him. Saigo for pity gave him a cigarette, but the action was discovered, and Saigo was not only himself beaten by the Japanese but he had to hit his agent on the face thirty times with his closed fist. "However," as he cheerfully remarked to the black-and-blue Carona, "a simple beating hasn't killed anyone yet." But Carona had to stand alone another day before he was permitted to come home.

Saigo had a Formosan friend, Tageoka, who could speak English. He was a boy full of smiles and fond of children. The two of them would often have scraps of biscuits in their pockets ; and as they patrolled the streets, their rifles with fixed bayonets over their shoulders, they would be surrounded by children, pushing and shoving, trying to get hold of the Formosans' hands. Even the toddlers would shout lustily "Sago and Tapioca" when they saw them. They seemed to realize that they could be as friendly with the Formosans as with the Japanese. They might be teased but never deliberately would they be harmed. 'Tapioca' in his sentry box would have several urchins round him ; "And do you know," Joy told us after she too had been to see him, "while I was there no

fewer than five people came to sell him rings, brooches and even a camera." As he slouched down the empty road after roll-call, he would cheerfully shout to the children round the doorways waiting for the 'all clear' whistle to blow, "If you've an older sister, tell her I'll be round to see her tonight and I'll bring some candy for you, too."

The lack of discipline among the guards was actually a menace rather than a help as we never knew when we would get involved in one of their disputes or punished through their carelessness. They organized a raid on the Japanese stores and used a rather foolish young Eurasian as a cat's-paw. When the Japanese discovered sugar and oil to be missing they took their revenge by making the whole camp go short for nearly a month. These Formosans were like irresponsible children: one of them when on duty at the beach would delight to laugh uproariously and cock a snook at the more serious residents of Hong Kong as they laboriously climbed the steps. At outside roll-calls, when the Japanese officers had passed down the line, they poked their agents in the ribs or did a cartwheel or two to show their lack of discipline. It was pathetic when Tageoka sought out some of the police and pleaded, "When it is all over you won't chop my head off, will you? I've never done you any harm."

The Japanese themselves were growing stricter. They had always been annoyed by the lack of courtesy the internees showed them. People were lax in bowing or would remain seated when officials passed by, walking or in their cars. The Lieutenant determined that he would teach us manners. At roll-calls we must stand strictly to attention and hold nothing in our

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hands. Even the elderly must put their stools away. The men must wear shirts, however ragged, and the women be decently dressed. It was rather funny to see other folk solemnly bowing, but the Japanese saw the smiles and one group was forced to stand in the sunshine at attention while guards with canes saw that no one relaxed. "After all," the interpreter said with reason, "you take your hats off; our custom is bowing. There is nothing to laugh at." Previously we had been allowed to shelter in wet weather, but now even the infirm must remain at attention in the rain. At one time no raincoats were permitted. Some folk were beaten for folding their arms or for not placing their feet as the Japanese desired them. As one glanced down the lines, nearly everyone appeared old, drawn and unhappy. Perhaps the Japanese got some satisfaction from having reduced the proud, imperialistic British community to this.

One day an unidentified plane losing height over the camp dropped some dummy bombs and part of its cargo round St Stephen's. Several people had narrow escapes and a few were wounded. The Japanese kept people out of their rooms until the 'bombs' had been removed. For days after all was over the men were not allowed to return and a smuggled Hong Kong paper carried the news that two hundred and fifty internees had been rendered homeless by an American raid. The Lieutenant himself visited the different blocks and calling us together, through his interpreter, solemnly sympathized with us over the American attack. It was the first time for three and a half years that a Japanese had addressed the camp. He also took the occasion to rebuke us, the women

especially, for rudeness in not bowing, and he gave a practical example of how it should be done. With more contacts such as these, things might have been better. In fact the years at Stanley represented a wasted opportunity for the Japanese, as by good treatment, by lectures and talks, they might have gained our understanding if not our active sympathy. As it was, they deliberately showed us the worst side of their natures. They demoralized us by the black market, just as they had demoralized China with drugs. They lost the friendship of those in the camp who previously had been sympathetic; just as by their policy of aggression they lost the friendship of the Chinese people.

We judged that the crisis in the Far Eastern war could not be long delayed, but the Lieutenant would never give any hint of events. However, he told us of things that he thought would depress us. We were informed at once, for instance, of Churchill's defeat. But the world outside had become somewhat unreal. We were more concerned with keeping alive on the food which was now at its worst. The camp prepared hard-baked biscuits as iron rations and we planned for the day for which we longed, yet feared.

Along the busy road where the squads were mincing pumpkin rind for our meal a young Russian mother shoved her new baby in a strange camp-made 'pram'. She was dressed in a sun-top and pants made from one of the Christmas flour bags which were marked in black letters 'For Export'. It was a sign of the times. Meanwhile among the crowds the black-market agents threaded their way, stopping each other like ants to compare prices and exchange the news before

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going on to the next one. There were the cries "Are you smoking?" "Is anyone using a chatty?" for matches were not to be bought. One man declared that for every cigarette he smoked he gave a light to ten or twelve others.

David George, quite naked, was sitting on the top step of the back veranda singing monotonously the words *Upidee, Upida*, which he repeated again and again in his shrill little voice until the exasperated Colonel Taylor put his head out of the window demanding "For God's sake, young David, sing *Ba, Ba, Black Sheep* for a change." Nancy came running home screaming, rubbing her arm where she had been bitten by Ronnie; while a few moments later he too came screaming because she had bitten him first. "I'm going crazy," said Elma in despair at it all. "I just cannot stand it." "That is just how we all feel," said Mary, who was bathing a septic foot in the tin we used

for collecting our rice. If any man ever needed "an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest" we needed it then.

We clung in those days to the faith we had within us. Surely our brief exile and oppression couldn't last much longer. We hoped, like Israel in ages long past, that the time could not be far away when "the valley of weeping" should "become a place of many springs".



CHAPTER IX

IN ALLIED HANDS

The technicians depart on August 10th, 1945—the war is over—August 30th: the British Navy arrives—Hong Kong after the war—we sail away on September 18th



"I'm going to have a move at last," said Tom Spelbury, putting his head round the door.

"Come in and tell us," we invited him. He was hardly recognizable as the same man who had been so active in the early days of the camp. He was dressed only in a pair of shorts. His ribs and breast-bone stood out prominently. His ankles were puffy, while here and there about his legs and arms he had bandages which covered sores. His face, which he had not shaved for several days, was drawn; and when he spoke his parted lips disclosed that half his front teeth were missing. Because of shortage of supplies, the dental committee would not agree to grant materials for repairs as his need was æsthetic rather than essential. For months he had been quarrelling with his room-mates. Colonel Taylor's endless talk exasperated him; and now he would speak to no one save Duncan Briggs. He could not sleep at night; and he

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had been pulling strings to obtain another billet. "I've pulled it off at last," he told us with more animation than we had known in him for a long time. "I'm going this very day. My move is certain."

The devil must have looked out and laughed when he saw Tom elated in this way. Move he most certainly did, but not at all as he expected. There came a sudden order from the Japanese that certain people, with technical qualifications, had to assemble in an hour or two, with their wives and children and all their possessions, prepared to leave. The camp was stunned by this break in its routine.

"I think we are being repatriated in exchange for Japanese technicians from Australia," said one optimist, as he tied up his camp-bed and collected his few goods together.

"My idea is that the Japanese are evacuating Hong Kong and they are taking us out to run the city," was the opinion of another, who also felt that things were bright.

Spelbury took another view. "They are taking us as a reprisal for something. We are to be hostages. They'll take us to Canton to get us out of the way as we know too much about the running of Hong Kong." His guess was probably nearest the truth. The one hundred and seventy-three who had to go, included among them some who were ill and a baby in a perambulator. They were packed on a junk, towed round to Hong Kong in the dark, and then taken to a centre there to await their next move. At least three of the men had been married in the hours before they left Stanley; nothing was more pathetic than the deserted love nest, on a small landing on the stairs which one

couple had prepared as their future home. We realized with startling clarity that we were entirely in our captors' hands and that anything might happen to us at any time.

It was Friday, August 10th, 1945, when the technicians were taken. In the unsettled atmosphere that followed it soon became apparent that there were other causes for wild speculation. The price of gold soared with fantastic speed. The Formosan guards were friendly and excited; and extravagant rumours sped about the blocks. There was the hint of a new bomb which had been used in Japan, and of landings near Hong Kong and in Japan itself. The first atomic bomb had been dropped, though we did not know it, before the technicians had been moved. On Tuesday the 14th, the rumours received a check as we watched an American plane sink a junk on coastal patrol a short distance from us in the bay. With a leisurely persistence it circled back and forth until its fire had entirely destroyed the ship. The war was obviously still on. By Thursday the 16th, the rumours, however, were stronger than ever. "Is it over? Oh, tell me, is it really finished?" said Elma Dale, putting the question we were all of us asking each other.

At noon-time we knew for certain. "Look, look," cried the children, "real American toilet paper." A distribution from the Japanese for which we had been clamouring for over two years was being made. Madly the children of the flat seized their victory rolls and struggled to see who could use some of it first.

Shortly afterwards every man, woman and child was given a couple of *fundoshi*, narrow strips of cloth with a string for tying round the waist; it was the only

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attempt that had been made to help us to be decently clad. Bars of soap were next sent from headquarters. It was obvious to us all that the war was really over.

"No more need to muck about the kitchen," said one of the squad, a happy grin lighting his face.

"And we're done with gardening," said some others who had heard him. The woodcutters declared a holiday; and through the whole camp a wave of excitement passed as everyone laughed and talked, speculating what the actual news might be. Formosans and Japanese seemed to have vanished, though columns of smoke were rising from the prison and headquarters; they were busy burning all their papers.

There was no news at all, but few slept that night. A stolen paper on the 17th told us that the Emperor had accepted surrender on the 14th and that the next day he had broadcast to his people. This served for us as an official announcement that the war was ended. The Lieutenant went into town to listen to his Emperor saying that it was 'according to the dictates of time and fate that we have resolved to pave the way for a peace for all generations to come by enduring the unavoidable and suffering what is insufferable'. It was indeed insufferable for the Lieutenant, his officers and men. The unbelievable had happened and they were stunned. They still had faith in the power of the Army and Air Force and did not realize that Japan had been stripped of her sea power before the atomic bombs were dropped. The change in events was more unexpected to them than it was to us who had never believed the propaganda we had read. Dazed, they turned to the only consolation they had, and for days they were drunk.

"Let us make a Union Jack," said Joy, who already, like Vee, had red, white and blue rags in her hair. But although one or two flags were hung from windows, we were asked to take them down. It was not known what, in their present mood, the Japanese might do. Also on the hill above the prison, in the forts, there were Japanese soldiers who were angry and disillusioned; we dared not risk attracting their attention. So we did not show the emotion we all felt, but kept it within our hearts.

Days of weary waiting followed, during which we were neither prisoners nor free, in which we experienced a strange empty deadness. Day after day the hours dragged on as we longed for the Navy. "There are no signs of any ships yet, but there is a strong rumour they will be here tomorrow," we were told.

"Not for a month," argued Colonel Taylor; "they cannot possibly get here before then." The men in their room, like Mona and Queenie in theirs, were all friendly once again. The end of the war had relieved us of our gnawing anxiety and at once we felt better. The sense of tiredness increased with the relaxation, but we had no worry save to know when the dreary time of waiting would be ended. We felt we were awaking from a deep sleep and became dimly conscious again of certain pages in our book of memory which had been closed for over three and a half years. We had forgotten their existence, but now we were able to see them faintly and then more clearly as we began to think of taking up our old lives once again. We who had died were being reborn.

Prisoners of war from Shamshuipo visited the camp and friends came from the city. Some of the tech-

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nicians, Tom Spelbury among them, returned from the centre where they had been left by the Japanese. We were still kept behind the wires, but others came and went at certain times. Planes had dropped leaflets telling us to wait until relief came, meanwhile the Japanese had their instructions to look after us and to see that we were fed.

The Colonial Secretary became once more not just our leader but King's representative as he resumed the status which the Japanese had refused to recognize. The camp was patrolled within the wires by our own police. Thanksgiving Services were held. In a short time Chinese coolies came from Stanley village to prepare our food and cut our wood. Smart suits, ties and leather shoes came out of hiding-places and some of Hong Kong's élite once more took on old airs with their new clothes as though their lessons had not been really learned. "Why," asked Guy perplexed, "do some people speak so crossly to the Chinese and order them about?"

The Hong Kong Red Cross sent us beans and the Japanese gave extra vegetables and daily meat. "It is horrible," Vee told me. "There is more than a pound each today. They have just dumped it in the road. The smell makes me feel ill; I won't go near it." We were satiated by the meat they sent us in increasing amounts as though they desired to nauseate us with the stuff we had previously demanded. The kitchen workers could not cope with it and the internees could not eat it. With relief we ran down to the beach one early morning and exchanged some old rags and rice for fish from the boatmen who now were able to cluster round the camp. This fresh steamed garoopa

seemed a heaven-sent delicacy and we all began to feel better, especially Vee, who at last had found something she could eat with pleasure. She was happier still when we were also able to get bananas by exchange.

We had concerts and music to help us pass the time. "It is a lovely evening," our beloved comedian informed us; "not a Nip in the air." But there seemed to be no British or Americans either and we were anxious for them to arrive. The little extra food more than satisfied us, but despite the extraordinary sense of mental relief, we could not sleep for longing for the barbed wires to be really broken. New values were established. Things which had been almost without price we threw away. The empty tins, the old bits of rubbish, more than filled our dust-bins. The camp became untidy, littered with paper; and people were even discarding butts of cigarettes. We talked about the past with each other as we waited for the Navy. "Oh, how thankful I am," said Elma Dale with feeling, as we watched Mabel Thornbridge now safely reunited with her husband who had broken his camp to pay her a short visit, "that during all my life at Stanley I have never done anything of which I am ashamed."

As our destitution became less acute some of the graciousness of living returned to us. We could once more invite our friends to eat a little as well as merely drink tea; it was possible to offer a cigarette and not expect another in return. "Mum, you're eating my food," expostulated David in alarm when Gladys mixed herself some milk; but the days when parents had to sacrifice food for their children were over.

On August 29th planes flew overhead. They were

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the first British ones we had knowingly seen since the beginning of the war in the Far East ; they were indeed a thrilling sight. In the afternoon, after pouring rain, they came again ; and down floated green, red and white parachutes, bringing us drugs and foods. The women were already speculating, as the goods were descending amid cheers, how they could get hold of the rayon for the underwear they so much needed. We were all so absorbed that not one of us saw the submarine in the bay from which the British Navy was taking its first glance at us.

“ They’re here ! ” “ They’re here ! ” the cry went round that evening. No one had need to ask who ‘ they ’ were. The roofs were crowded ; away to the south we could just make out the grey forms of ships. Our time of release had arrived. Next morning the planes came over in endless waves ; formations of two, three, four or eight, sweeping down low over the buildings, circling the camp. We waved, we cheered. Even after our heads ached with the noise, we abandoned all else to dash from window to veranda to get a better view of the roaring machines. Ronnie had retired under his mother’s camp-bed, frightened by the excitement and the noise. “ Mummy,” asked Nancy, “ when will peace be over ? Can’t we have war again ? ”

Then in the late afternoon the Rear-Admiral himself arrived at the camp : and for the first time we saw a jeep and heard its name. As the flags of the Allied Nations were raised he told us, “ The motive that has inspired all my blue-jackets to get here as quickly as possible has been you people.” Yes, we were safe at last in Allied hands. The Union Jack fluttered in the

breeze. At headquarters the Japanese flag had been replaced by the White Ensign. The Japanese and the Formosans had gone ; British sailors were on guard. They might look to us gross and overfed, with fantastically smooth pink skins, but they were our own people. Vee, Joy and Guy, like the other children, we hardly saw those days : they were gazing in adoration at their new friends, following them about, through them re-discovering the outside world. They tasted the thrill of joy-rides and went on board the battle-ships. After a small lifetime of destitution they saw a land of plenty. Joy and Guy sat striking matches until several boxes were exhausted, just for the happiness the experience of prodigality gave them.

Foodstuffs, too, came into the camp from the Navy ; tinned vegetables for which we craved ; butter and white sugar ; bully beef. We could not eat at first as we were violently ill. " I have survived the war, can I survive the peace ? " Mary asked in an agony of indigestion. Our taste for rice and vegetable stew, however, was entirely gone. Little by little we got used to the new food. Our inertia and weakness vanished. It no longer pained us to mount the stairs. After several weeks men vowed that there were fewer hollows in their cheeks when they shaved themselves. These can't be my own legs I'm soaping, one thought at bath time. Eyes were less shrunken and appearances less grey. We even felt that memories were improving and that concentration was more easy.

The Navy sent us sacks of Australian flour dated June 1945. " It is so recent it seems almost in the future," commented Colonel Taylor. " I have some black weevil bread I dried as an iron ration, but now

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it looks so indecent that I am throwing it away." After he had some real bread again he declared, "I now feel not only free but full." It was a new sensation to be eating authentic and seemingly unlimited food again.

By September 1st some of the sick were carried from the camp to leave by hospital ship. It brought tears to the eyes to see them go. Ten days later the *Empress of Australia* sailed for England. Gladys and David George and many other mothers and small children were among the large numbers on board. We ourselves did not leave until another week had gone, and this gave us opportunity to visit Hong Kong.

The city in which more than two million people had lived before the war now contained less than half a million. Whole families had gone to their ancestral homes in China, but many had been killed or died of starvation. As we saw the frightened look in the eyes of those we met, who, while 'free' had yet been in constant dread of the unknown spies around them, as we heard of the poverty of their living, we realized who it was that had most truly suffered during the years of war. The people were dazed by their currency and transport problems. There seemed to be no place to break the vicious circle and bring order out of chaos. So many of the leaders, some from our camp among them, were endeavouring to re-establish the *status quo*, not realizing that a new order was struggling to birth in Asia. An attempt might be made to gather the old gangs together once again, but life could never be exactly the same in the Far East. Japan, through her high-sounding propaganda for the Greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere and Asia for the Asiatics, had struck responsive chords in the hearts of youth. China

by her struggle had shown what a nation might achieve. Any shreds of false superiority had gone from the British and Americans. They were known for what they were : human beings like others of different race and colour. A world of new ideals demanded new methods and men filled with the spirit of the age to help put them into practice.

We had a bonfire before we left. It was a family celebration of our release. The few goods we possessed that could still be used we sent into the city for distribution, but the rest we burnt. We sat round the blaze with our friends, singing the past away. "So Stanley is burnt away," Vee declared as we watched the dancing flames. "The old is finished. Now we move to something new."

For the children especially this new life was a great adventure. In the first houses they entered they ran wildly up and down, turning on the lights, ringing bells, discovering things they had completely forgotten. They had to learn again the very art of using knives and forks. It was many months before Guy ceased to lick his plate and Joy refrained from peeping into dust-bins. But from the ashes of our dead selves what new things were arising ?

That is the question that was in our minds as, with Kate Shelley, we leant against the rails of one of His Majesty's ships when, part of 'Operation Joyride', we were being taken away from Hong Kong. Stanley memories were fading fast, though we still had something of the feeling of awaking from a troubled dream-filled sleep. Already a touch of romance was giving rosy tints to experiences which a few months previously had been full of dread. The mental anxiety was over,

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and we no longer feared lest we should never obtain release, or that the end would bring massacre or attack with heavy loss of life. The possibility of starvation was forgotten. We could no longer realize in any vivid sense what it had meant to be interned ; for the things which underlay that life were gone.

“ And thank God for that,” said Kate, who looked older and shrunken, but still with the old fire burning in her eyes. “ Internment will, I imagine, have had little permanent effect on most of us. A few will be bitter and will have been made worse than they were. Some of us may have learnt lessons which will change our lives. It all depended on our attitude to God whether we were able to use our experiences as opportunities in which to do His will, and whether we were able to absorb the buffets we received without losing resiliency of spirit.”

In silence we watched the schools of flying-fishes darting away from the speeding ship. Then she spoke again, “ I have never been so impressed with the value of faith for the ordinary man and woman, just to uphold them when things are bad ; to help them live decent lives when circumstances are against them. Also it was their quiet common-sense living that made all the difference to their neighbours in the crowded rooms. We must never forget what it feels like to be really poor.”

“ The police were joking,” I told her, “ that they will be too soft and no more use in future. They know too well what it means to be without food and fuel to be harsh on those who are in need. Won't we all find it easier to identify ourselves with those who suffer ? Charity will never mean the same, for we too have

received it. We know that the poor of other lands, of India, of China, of Japan itself, have so many characteristics which are not national but those which poverty has given them. If we want to help them to be good citizens, to lead a fuller life, we have got to see that they live on a higher physical level with at least a measure of security. Truly to give the message of Jesus Christ means we must also in His name wash the feet of those to whom we speak."

Kate must have seen me looking at the children. They were splashing in a canvas bath, while some of the officers romped with them. Vee still looked pale and ill. "They have gained independence and a great deal of assurance. Some of the smaller ones in camp have got away from amahs and other servants and have learnt to know their parents. It has not been good physically, but they will get over that."

"They will get over that," I repeated. "Rest and good food will make Vee well again. But what of the children in nearly every land who also need rest and food, and for whom there is no possibility of either? Shall any of us who have suffered from this war ever be able to look at things in just the same indifferent way again? One of the things for which we must pray is that we may never forget."

"I do not want to forget the camaraderie," said Mary who had joined us. "I shall always feel a real affection towards those who have shared the experiences of Stanley such as I shall feel to no one else. Especially so in the case of those with whom we worshipped without the hindrance of denominational barriers, and who showed us the possibility of triumph over the adverse circumstances in which we lived."

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We were all of us missing the fellowship of the camp. "This morning Guy was looking a little wistful," I told them, "and suddenly he said: 'Daddy, can't we go back to Stanley?' He had forgotten that he ever was hungry, but he remembered his many friends, and the good times they had."

We pondered over this for a moment. "I think we women fought too much," Mary confessed. "But it was for our children, our husbands, as well as ourselves. We sometimes introduced a spirit of conflict and struggle, yet underneath it all there was co-operation. There had to be or we should not have managed. We have learnt about each other, whatever our social status in the days before the war. Men got to know their employees and Government officers their men."

"It was in those early days especially that some things were good," Kate broke in, "when we knew what it was to redeem the time, to have leisure to think and read, and energy for the more worthwhile things of life."

We remembered a group who were determined to experiment in communal living. They planned to live close together so as to share some of their meals, to help each other with the tiny children, and their laundry. "Yes," said Kate, "we shall need experiments like that to discover a better way of life now the war is over."

"What castles in the air we build," I laughed.

"But the prayer tells us it is our job when we have made them to put solid structure underneath, linking them to earth," Kate spoke so softly her voice was hardly heard above the noises of the ship. "Remember the words of Paul: 'For our light affliction, which is

but for a moment, worketh for us . . . while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen'."

We stood silently together while in thankfulness and dedication the words rose to our lips: "We behold how some things pass away that others may replace them, but Thou dost never depart, O God, our Father. May we whose hearts are restless until they repose in Thee, so look upon the unseen that in the end we may possess Thee and be possessed by Thee."

We moved our gaze from the white wake which linked us to the internment camp at Stanley, and turned to the seemingly boundless sea before us. Away to the horizon it stretched, deep blue and calm beneath a cloudless sky. Beyond, still out of sight, lay home.

